

In Another World With My Smartphone

13

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"DOES THAT MEAN WE CAN VISIT THE REVERSE WORLD AS WELL?"

LINZE SPOKE UP QUIETLY, CAUSING DOCTOR BABYLON TO SHIFT HER EYES A LITTLE.

"SORTA. IF SOMEONE WANTS TO GO WITH TOUYA, THERE ARE LIMITATIONS IN PLACE RIGHT NOW. THE LIMIT IS ACTUALLY WEIGHT-BASED. PEOPLE OTHER THAN TOUYA NEED TO WEIGH NO MORE THAN 48KG EACH. PROBABLY 45KG JUST TO BE SAFE..."

DOCTOR BABYLON'S WORDS CAUSED THE GIRLS TO FREEZE IN PLACE. I QUESTIONED WHETHER OR NOT SHE WAS EVEN CAPABLE OF BEING SENSITIVE.

ALL THE GIRLS ARE
IN A FESTIVE MOOD!





“PLEASE LET ME
TAKE YOUR
BLOOD, YOUR
GUTS, YOUR
SPINE... ♪”

“PLEASE, PLEASE... ♪
OH PRETTY PRETTY PLEASE... ♪
I’LL GOUGE YOU OH-SO-NEATLY,
SO PLEASE GIVE ME YOUR EYES... ♪
PLEASE LET ME TAKE YOUR
HEART...! ♪”

SHE KEPT
SINGING TO
HERSELF, AS IF
OBLIVIOUS TO THE
BLOOD SMEARED
ON HER... AS IF
OBLIVIOUS TO THE
HORRIFIED CROWD
AROUND HER.
BUT THEN, HER SMILE
WIDENED. SHE STOPPED
TWIRLING AROUND, AND
SHE ACKNOWLEDGED
HER ONLOOKERS.

Character Profiles



Elze Silhoueska

One of Touya's fiancées. The elder of the twin sisters saved by Touya some time ago. A ferocious melee fighter, she makes use of gauntlets in combat. Her personality is fairly to-the-point and blunt. She can make use of Null fortification magic, specifically the spell **[Boost]**. She loves spicy foods.



**Yumina
Urnea Belfast**

One of Touya's fiancées. Princess of the Belfast Kingdom. She was twelve years old in her initial appearance, and her eyes are heterochromatic. The right is blue, while the left is green. She has mystic eyes that can discern the true character of an individual. She has three magical aptitudes: Earth, Wind, and Darkness. She's also extremely proficient with a bow and arrow. She fell in love with Touya at first sight.



Mochizuki Touya

A highschooler who was accidentally murdered by God. He's a no-hassle kind of guy who likes to go with the flow. He's not very good at reading the atmosphere, and typically makes rash decisions that bite him in the ass. His mana pool is limitless, he can flawlessly make use of every magical element, and he can cast any Null spell that he wants. He's currently the Grand Duke of Brunhild.



**Sushie
Urnea Ortlinde**

One of Touya's fiancées. She was ten years old in her initial appearance. Her nickname is Sue. The niece of Belfast's king, and Yumina's cousin. Touya saved her from being attacked on the road. She has an innocently adventurous spirit.



**Lucia Leah
Regulus**

One of Touya's fiancées. The Third Princess of the Regulus Empire, she's Yumina's age. She fell in love with Touya when he saved her during a coup. She likes to fight with twin blades, and she's on good terms with Yumina.



Kokonoe Yae

One of Touya's fiancées. A samurai girl from the far eastern land of Eashen, a country much like Japan. She tends to repeat herself and speak formally, she does. Yae is quite a glutton, eating more than most normal people would dare touch. She's a hard worker, but can sometimes slack off. Her family runs a dojo back in Eashen, and they take great pride in their craft. It's not obvious at first, but her boobs are pretty big.



Linze Silhoueska

One of Touya's fiancées. The younger of the twin sisters saved by Touya some time ago. She wields magic, specifically from the schools of Light, Water, and Fire. She finds talking to people difficult due to her own shy nature, but she is known to be surprisingly bold at times. Rumors say she might be the kind of girl who enjoys male on male romance... She loves sweet foods.



Paula

A stuffed toy bear animated by years upon years of the **[Program]** spell. She's the result of two-hundred years of programmed commands, making her seem like a fully aware living being. Paula... Paula's the worst!



Sakura

A mysterious girl Touya rescued in Eashen. She had lost her memories, but has now finally gotten them back. Her true identity is Farnese Forneus, daughter of the Xenoahs Overlord. Currently living a peaceful life in Brunhild, and she has joined the ranks of Touya's fiancées.



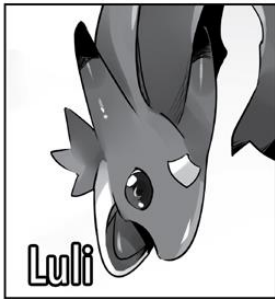
Leen

One of Touya's fiancées. Former Clan Matriarch of the Fairies, she now serves as Brunhild's Court Magician. She claims to be six-hundred-and-twelve years old, but looks tremendously young. She can wield every magical element except Darkness, meaning her magical proficiency is that of a genius. Leen is a bit of a light-hearted bully.



**Hildegard
Minas Lestia**

One of Touya's fiancées. First Princess of the Knight Kingdom Lestia. Her swordplay talents earned her a reputation as a 'Knight Princess'. Touya saved her life when she was attacked by a group of Phrase, and she's loved him ever since. She's a good friend of Yae, and she stammers a bit when flustered.



Luli

The fourth of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. She is the Azure Monarch, the ruler of dragons. She often clashes with Kohaku due to her condescending personality.



Kougyoku

The third of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. She is the Flame Monarch, ruler of feathered things. Though her appearance is flashy and extravagant, she's actually quite cool and collected.



Sango and Kokuyou

The second of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. They are the Black Monarch, two in one. The rulers of scaled beasts. They can freely manipulate water. Sango is a tortoise, and Kokuyou is a snake. Sango is a female, and Kokuyou is a male (but he's very much a female at heart).



Kohaku

The first of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. She's the White Monarch, the ruler of beasts, the guardian of the west and a beautiful White Tiger. She can create devastating shockwaves, and also change size at will.



High Rosetta

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Workshop, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Rosetta for short. Her Airframe Serial Number is #27. For whatever reason, she's the most reliable of the bunch.



Francesca

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Hanging Garden, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Cesca for short. Her Airframe Serial Number is #23. She likes to tell very inappropriate jokes.



Mochizuki Moroha

The God of Swords. Claims to be Touya's older sister. She trains the and advises the knights of Brunhild. She's gallant and brave, but also a bit of an airhead at times.



Mochizuki Karen

The God of Love. Claims to be Touya's older sister. She stays in Brunhild because she says she needs to catch a servile god, but doesn't really do all that much in the way of hunting him. She's a total pain in the butt.



Pamela Noël

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Tower, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Noël for short and wears a jersey. Her Airframe Serial Number is #25. She sleeps all the time, and eats laying down. Her tremendous laziness means she doesn't do all that much.



Preliora

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Rampart, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Liora for short and wears a blazer. Her Airframe Serial Number is #20. She's the oldest of the Babylon Gynoids, and would attend to the... Personal night-time needs of Doctor Babylon herself. She has no experience with men.



Fredmonica

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Hangar, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Monica for short. Her Airframe Serial Number is #28. She's a funny little hard worker who has a bit of a casual streak. She's a good friend of Rosetta, and is the Gynoid with the most knowledge of the Frame Gears.



Bell Flora

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Alchemy Lab, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Flora for short and wears a nurse outfit. Her Airframe Serial Number is #21. A nurse with dangerously big boobs and even more dangerous medicines.



Doctor Regina Babylon

An ancient genius from a lost civilization, reborn into an artificial body that resembles a small girl. She is the "Babylon" that created the many artifacts and forgotten technologies scattered around the world today. Her Airframe serial number is #29. She remained in stasis for five-thousand years before finally being awakened.



Atlantica

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Research Lab, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Tica for short. Her Airframe serial number is #22. Of the Babylon Numbers, she is the one who best embodies Doctor Babylon's inappropriately perverse side.



Lileleparshe

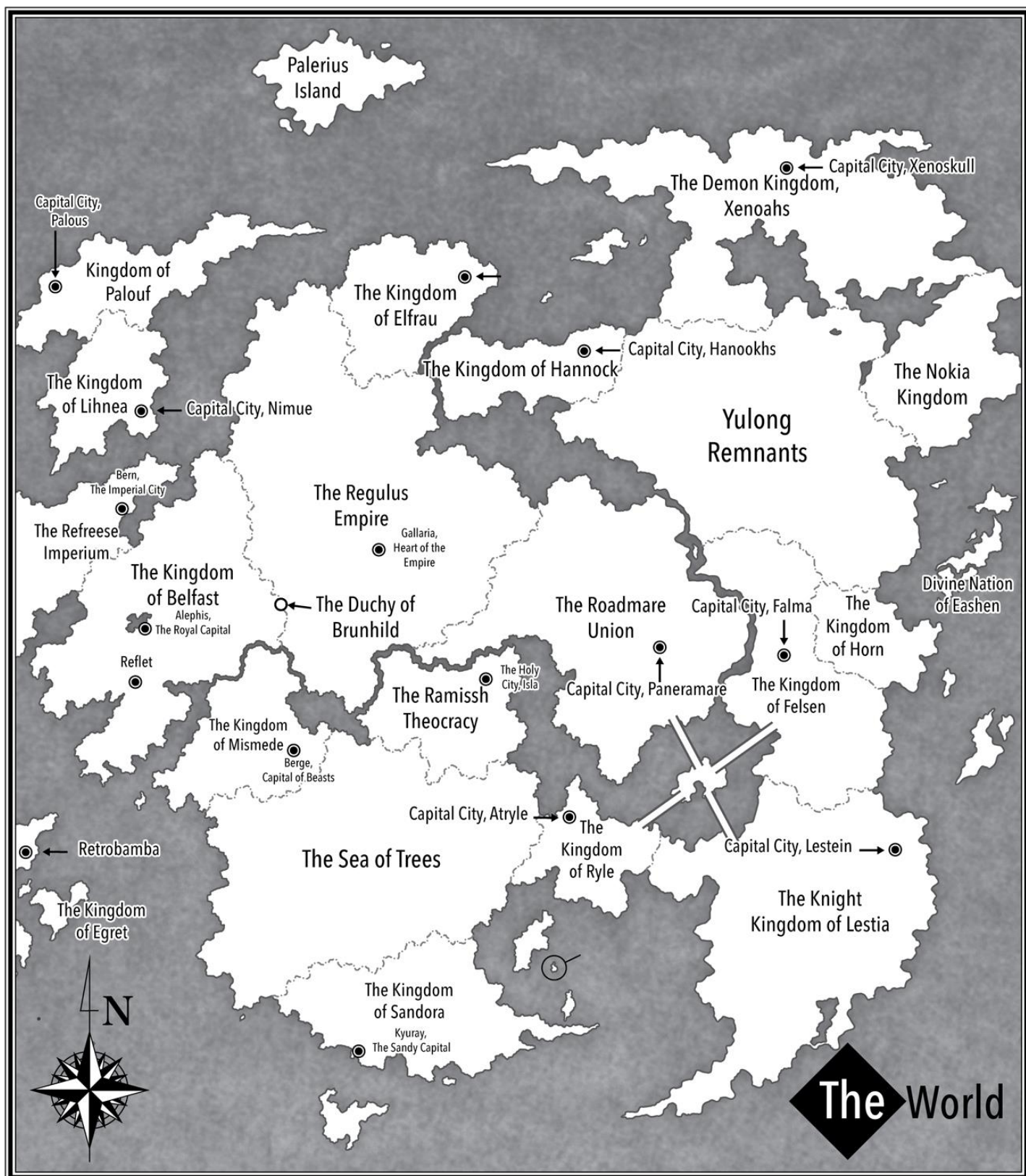
Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Storehouse, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Parshe for short and wears a shrine maiden outfit. Her Airframe Serial Number is #26. She's tremendously clumsy, even if she's just trying to help. The amount of stuff she ruins is troublingly high.

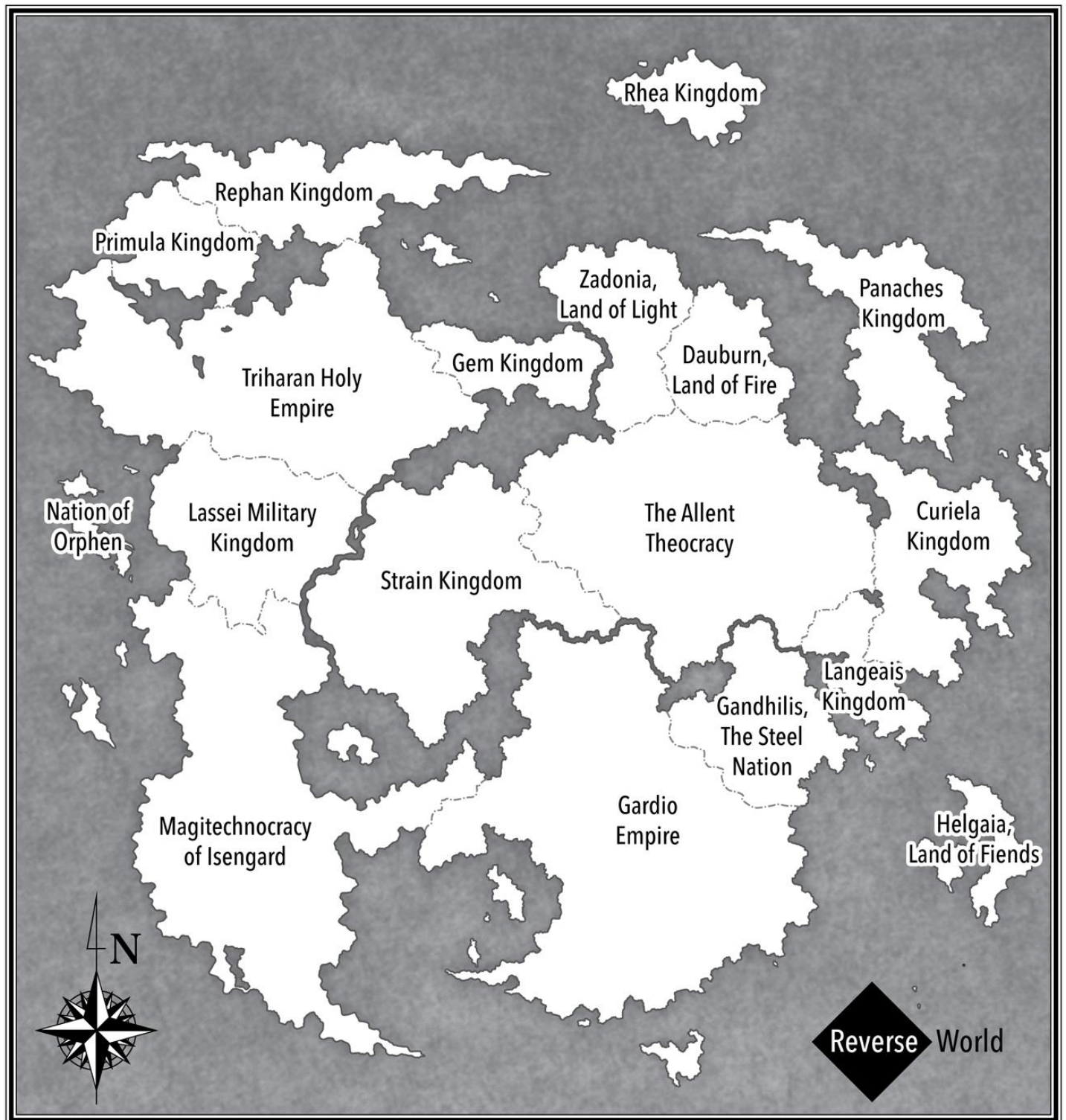


Irisfam

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Library, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Fam for short and wears a school uniform. Her Airframe Serial Number is #24. She's a total book fanatic and hates being interrupted when she's reading.

The Worlds of In Another World With My Smartphone World Map





The Story So Far!

Mochizuki Touya, wielding a smartphone customized by God himself, continues to live his life in a new world. After many adventures, Touya, now Grand Duke of a small nation named Brunhild, has joined forces with the other world leaders. Why? To stop the incoming extradimensional threat known as the Phrase. These merciless invaders from another world will stop at nothing until they get what they desire. As Touya continued to investigate potential ways to repel this threat, he found himself falling into another world entirely. This Reverse World was like a mirrored version of the world he knew, and relied on a mysterious mechanical technology known as the Gollems. Now, the fate of two worlds may hang in the balance...

Interlude: Festival Preparation!

There were various sweet treats arranged on the table.

Cake, pudding, castella, bean paste and syrup, tarts, ice cream, sherbet, pies, scones, jello, and yogurts... A pleasant aroma wafted out through the store.

“Everything looks so delicious! Thanks so much, Aer!”

“No problem!” Aer slowly nodded her head at Lu as she said that. The two of them laughed gently as they looked over the dessert-filled table, picking up a few afterward.

I took one, but I didn’t want to take too many. The two of them, on the other hand, seemed happy to pick through the whole lot. *Girls sure like sweets...*

Each of the girls had individual preferences for desserts. Yumina liked parfaits, Elze liked castellas, Linze liked ice cream, Yae liked bean paste, Sue liked cakes, Lu liked pudding, Hilde liked cream puffs, Leen liked chocolate, and Sakura liked tarts. There was a lot of diversity as far as their preferences went...

Aer’s café, Parent, was originally situated in Reflet, but we’d opened up a branch in Brunhild. The main building in Reflet was headed by her younger sister, who had recently gotten married. Aer decided to move to Brunhild and manage the new place. Today, we’d been invited to taste-test the new menu. And that was all that had happened so far. Yae was certainly happy to have been invited.

The items on the menu were all recipes I’d introduced to this world, but I was amazed by how faithfully Aer had recreated the items. The ingredients weren’t exactly the same as the ones available back home, but even with that handicap, the stuff she’d made tasted incredible.

Then again, I wasn't the best one to judge. I didn't have a big sweet tooth to begin with and hadn't tried a lot of desserts from my old world.

I preferred stuff like tea, personally... Tea was delicious.

"I've eaten a lot... They're just so tasty..."

"Aha... Just don't eat too much!" Elze giggled a little after Yumina spoke. I didn't think she'd be smiling so much if she weighed herself in the morning... Those were thoughts I didn't dare to speak, though.

I certainly couldn't find any fault with the stuff Aer had made. They were right, though... The stuff tasted really good. Almost too good.

"Ahaha... I wonder if these could be eaten outside, I wonder."

"Oh, there's a terrace outside..." Hilde spoke up in response to Yae's pondering.

The second branch of the Parent Café was built into a busy corner of Brunhild, it had a terraced dining area outside with a nice little view. It would be nice to sit out there, provided the weather was nice. I was wondering what Yae meant with her pondering, given that we'd passed the terrace on the way in.

"Ah, I did not mean it like that, I did not... I meant more for carrying food around... Food that you can hold in your hand."

Ah, so Yae was probably referring to easy-to-hold treats like crêpes and stuff. That made sense enough.

"Mmm... That's right. We're opening the festival soon, aren't we? I guess opening up a dessert shop is good, but we don't have much in the way of food you can snack on while walking around the place..."

"Oh, what about the waffle cone recipe I taught you?" If we had ice cream cones, people could pick them up and eat them as they walked around the festival. That'd probably sell well in Brunhild.

“Ah, yes. It’s one of our main products. But I wonder if we can do more of that...”

“Hey, Touya... Come on. Look it up.”

“Alright...”

Elze urged me to look up some new stuff. I was from another world, but I didn’t know everything that was in it... so if I needed information, I’d turn to the internet.

Hmm... Desserts you can carry... One-handed stuff... Hm... Aha... I wondered if easy-to-carry desserts were so popular because girls liked to snack on sweet things on the go. Either way, it was clear there were a lot of varieties.

“This, this, and this... That should do...” I highlighted a few results from the image search and projected them into the air.

“Amazing...! There are so many... You made all these yourself?”

“Uh... Kind of. The recipes are common in the town I grew up in... I’m not sure how it’ll turn out until we try the recipes...” I gave a vague reply to Aer’s question. Fortunately, none of the images had anything that gave away the fact that they were pictures from another world... My secret was still safe from the general public for the time being.

Aer stared greedily at the floating images of desserts. Lu and the others seemed to get excited as well.

“There sure seem to be a lot of crêpes...”

“I wanna eat that waffle-looking thing!”

“What’s that thin roll-cake...? It looks amazing...”

“And that apple pie stick...! I want to try it... I really do!”

“Mmm... Seems like there’s a lot going on with these things...” I pulled up a few recipes, allowing Aer and Lu to commit them to memory.

“What is this strange fish-like pastry...?” Leen pointed out a taiyaki... I wondered if that’d be the kind of one-handed dessert we could use. You could certainly carry it easily.

Leen was suspicious of what was inside the pastry, so I explained it to her. Taiyaki was a pretty good snack.

“I see. There’s bean paste inside, then...”

“It looks tasty, it does...” Yae was practically salivating. She was also shoveling cakes and snacks from the table into her mouth. That girl was a real sucker for delicious treats... It was definitely a weakness.

“Can you put other things inside it?”

“Yeah, you can. I’ve seen variants with cream or chocolate inside before.”

“That sounds good.” There were a lot of taiyaki variants. I’d even seen more novelty types with things like bacon, cheese, and curry inside.

“Does it need to be fish-shaped?”

“Nope. You can have it as a different shape if you want. In fact, uh... hold on a sec. Here, it was originally more of a round shape.” I searched for an image of some imagawayaki, a round bean paste-filled pastry. It was definitely a simple design.

“I’ll make a mold for you guys. It’s not all that complicated.”

“Great! I’ll get the bean paste ready!”

“Ooh! That sounds good!” Elze seemed pretty fired up. I didn’t realize they wanted to eat it already! Everyone seemed excited, so I

sighed and pulled an iron ingot out of **[Storage]** and began shaping it into a mold for the pastry.

The café was outfitted with a magical furnace from Felsen. It worked like a regular stove, but was just operated by a Fire spellstone. Aer bought it using the profits from the café back in Reflet, and it seemed like she got a good price for it too.

Naturally, she'd bought it from Olba Strand. That guy never missed a good opportunity...

I produced five molds for them to use. They were a little bit heavy for women to use, so I enchanted them with **[Gravity]** to reduce their weight.

Aer ran into the kitchen, one of the molds in tow. Lu went right after her. That was an amusing sight.

"The festival is going to be quite fun..." Yumina smiled sweetly. It was difficult, but everyone in town was getting ready. It all started as a ploy to give the young king of Palouf some confidence, but I was happy to see how it was all coming together.

"Personally, I am looking forward to the test of martial skill, I am. You will all see how powerful my brother is, you will!"

"My own elder brother won't be defeated so easily, either!" Yae and Hilde had ostensibly been assigned to the security detail, but they'd have time to check out events. They were no different from anyone else at the event, after all. It was fine for them to take some time out.

Still, I didn't want the knight order to get too overwhelmed... They had a lot riding on them during this upcoming event. I decided I should probably pay them all a bonus alongside their salary. Then again, I had just given everyone a raise in terms of pay... The knight order's salary was still being paid out of my own pocket, at the end

of the day. Kousaka was definitely helping with national income, but we weren't pulling in a lot.

We had to use the treasury funds to repair Frame Gears damaged during Phrase skirmishes, and we'd also recently funneled a lot of cash into creating the gate to the Reverse World, along with the mana storage tank. These were necessary expenses, so I had to prioritize them.

The Behemoth Treants were worth quite a bit, so I was glad I'd killed them. I didn't want to flood the market with dragon materials or spellstones, either... so I had to deliberately hold back on selling that kind of stuff.

Adventurers were still coming and going to the dungeon islands, and they were paying the toll on their way. That was a valuable source of income for Brunhild.

Money made by beach-goers was also added to the treasury... Personally hunting Mithril Golems seemed like easy money to me, but I didn't want to poach too many strong monsters in other nations. That'd be the same as stealing livelihood from other adventurers. Taking all their spoils wouldn't be right, since they needed to build up their own fortunes and paths in life.

I was a Gold-rank adventurer, which made me stiff competition for other adventurers. It'd probably be better if I went for Orichalcum Golems. But then again, who knew what kind of economic damage I could do if I recklessly ran around farming money like that...

Achieving gold rank took a lot of effort... Hilde's grandpa had done the same thing as me, long ago... and he rarely responded to quests asked of him.

Ultimately, money was the root of happiness, but I needed to think very carefully about the ways in which I earned it. It'd be easier if I didn't need money to make things work...

“We did it!”

Lu and Aer brought a plate through from the kitchen. The pastries on the plate were a little burned here and there, but they looked tasty enough.

“This one is bean paste, and this one is custard. Please excuse the burnt corners...”

“No, don’t worry. The crisp parts taste pretty great too. I like it a lot.”
I reached out to grab out a pastry.

Oof, it’s hot!

I bit down into the crispy pastry, and the hot custard flowed out from inside and spread across my tongue. *Mmm... Delicious... We can definitely sell these... They’re tasty and easy to eat.*

My stomach was full from the cake I’d eaten earlier, so I didn’t want to overdo it.

“Delicious... I could eat this all day... I want to try all the different types... Ah... Khh?!”

“S-Sakura?! Here, tea!”

Sakura had eaten too quickly, resulting in some of the pastry getting caught in her throat. Linze quickly held a cup of tea up to her. She really shouldn’t have stuffed both types into her mouth with both hands... I didn’t think bean paste and custard was a good combo, really.



“You can make all kinds if we change the filling. I’m sure this’ll be popular.”

“We need to practice in order to crisp the edges a little better... It’ll depend on the filling, too.” Aer and Lu were already talking about how to make the product better. It was almost like Lu had become an employee of the place before anyone noticed.

“Ah, I’m sorry I’m late! Ah... Is there anything left?!”

A woman threw open the café’s front door and looked around frantically toward the table that was stacked with treats.

It was Micah, the owner of the Silver Moon Inn. She’d moved from Reflet to Brunhild, just like Aer.

“There’s still plenty left, don’t you worry. I’ll bring some more out now!” Aer smiled and headed back into the kitchen as a few more people came into the café from behind Micah.

Oh no.

“Wow! There are lots of great sweet treats here, you know? Good work sniffing this place out.”

“No big deal. I knew you’d be interested in this kind of stuff, Karen.”

“Indeed... It came in handy this time.”

“Wahoo! Hic! I schmell dessert, hic! Shmells like... Booze! Yahoo!”

Oh dear. The new intruders were Karen, Moroha, Karina, and the drunk little goblin known as Suika. It was an unfortunate gathering of gods.

There were seats and tables available for them, but we’d only just opened the place and there wasn’t even a sign up yet... I had no idea how they’d figured us out. In the end, I didn’t think about it too hard. It was fruitless to question the divine. I’d built it, so they’d come.

“Lu, sweetie! Get me some of that fish pastry, you know? And tea, too! Touya’s paying, you know?!”

“Y-Yes, I’ll get right on that!” Lu took up a serving tray and ran back to the kitchen. She really was acting like an employee... Then again, Karen was her future sister-in-law, so she was probably just doing her best to appease her. Also, what the hell was that about her saying I was paying? Didn’t she have any money? I sighed quietly as Karen explored the menu.

“Oho... So this is the menu. It’s so nice, you know? Everything looks amazing...”

“Hold on a sec, you just ordered a taiyaki! Don’t go overboard...!”

“Don’t worry, you know? How about we tell you something interesting?”

“Huh?” I raised at that. It sounded a little ominous. I was certainly curious to hear what someone like Karen regarded as interesting, though.

I stared over at her, and suddenly Moroha piped up.

“Apparently the dungeon island has itself a Carbuncle. Karina here said she saw one, at least... Isn’t that right?”

“Yeah, sure is. Ain’t in the dungeon, but I saw it from a distance. It was a Carbuncle for sure... It’ll be worth a lotta money.”

Money, you say? But what the hell is a Carbuncle anyway? I looked puzzled, so Linze chimed in with some much-needed clarification.

“A Carbuncle is a species of magical beast with a gemstone embedded in its forehead. The stone is actually a spellstone, and they’re usually really pure grade. High-tier staffs and wands usually have Carbuncle spellstones embedded into their tips.”

Ohhh, I think I remember reading about that in the guild library. The illustration was like an oversized squirrel with a fire spellstone in its forehead.

Still, just one spellstone wouldn't make a ton of cash. It might cover a good all-you-can-eat dinner, though...

"Hic! Achtuually, I heard it was a Hydra Carbuncle, hic! Mahny headsh... And a spellstone in each, hic! Big money, biiihg money!"

"What, a Hydra?!"

I jolted my head toward the little drunkard. *Isn't the Hydra more like a many-headed snake? Kind of like Orochi... Could there really be a creature like that, with a powerful spellstone in all of its heads?*

"She's right. It was a pretty big Hydra. If you took it out, you'd definitely get a lot of money."

"It's on Brunhild's territory, Touya. There'd be no issue if you killed it. Plus, it's your job as king to reduce the dangers on that island to begin with!"

"Better hurry though, you know? Other adventurers might take it down instead, ehehe..."

"I better go kill it quick..." I couldn't pass up the opportunity. A golden chance had manifested right in front of me, so I needed to take it. Time was of the essence!

"See ya, hic! Ah, Aer! Gimme that schtrawberry wine tart and the rum raisin ice creaaam sandwich!"

"I'd like the fruit sorbet, you know?"

"Raindrop cake for me."

"Opera cake, please!" I listened to them rattle off their orders as I opened a **[Gate]** to the dungeon island. I wanted to get it done as soon as possible. But man, they were really ordering a lot... Not as much as Yae, but still...

Looks like I'm gonna need all the money I can get. Wait for me, Carbuncle Hydra!

"Geez... That was rough..." I just barely managed to beat the Hydra.

That was one hell of a snake... I knew it had that kind of power, but geez...

Whenever I cut one of its necks, the head just grew back right away. On top of that, each of the heads breathed a different magical element!

I killed it by using a blade and cutting them all at the same time. It made sense, really. The spellstones were in each head, so taking out each one disabled the flow of magic through its body.

Still, the fights on the dungeon island were extremely rough... The Hydra's blood was also a pretty potent poison... This thing was extremely dangerous.

Luckily, the battle was won and now I had nine spellstones that were around the size of soccer balls. Once I delivered them to the guild, I traded them in for some serious cash. Enough to give a bonus to everyone working in the knight order, too.

I left the guild and walked back to Parent Café. I walked through the castle town and saw everyone preparing for the coming festival. There were stalls being erected, and decorations in various street corners.

A festive air was already around the town, even though we were just preparing. I kind of liked the bustling atmosphere, though. It was exciting.

I opened up the door to the café, and the little bell by the door jingled.

"...Yikes." The table had a ton of glasses, dishes, and cups piled up. I couldn't believe how much food they must've eaten... Yumina and

the others were sitting around the table drinking tea, but Yae was still snacking.

I could see Karen smiling slyly as she chatted at the end of the table. *What the hell... You ordered way too much!*

“Hic! Wewcome back big bwooo... Did you make good moneeey?”

“...Yeah. But looking at the damage here, I might have to fork it all over at this rate.” Suika, the drunk little goblin she was, continued to shovel dumplings into her mouth. Gods didn’t even need to eat... She was totally taking advantage. Come to think of it, that probably meant they had bottomless stomachs too... If I wasn’t careful, they’d drive the food costs up just as much as Yae did.

But they ate standard amounts in the castle... Maybe they were just going all out because it was dessert food.

“I wanted to give everything a try, is all... Kind of lost myself in the taste.”

“Mhm. You can’t tell taste by looking. The only way to tell if something is tasty is by eating! Everything on the menu was tasty, though.”

Wait, everything?! You seriously ordered everything from the menu?! I went out to get that money and you... You finally really did it... You... You maniacs! You ate it up! God damn you!

“Ah, uhm... Touya... Sorry, but, uhm...” Aer quietly murmured towards me.

“Oh, right. No worries, I’ll cover my sisters now...!” I had originally intended to pay for half of the food-tasting, but now I had to pay for my sisters, too... I didn’t need to worry about Micah, at least... Aer invited her, so that was her issue.

“Ah, no... Actually, uhm... I’m out of ingredients... Entirely... I don’t have any fruits or sugar for the festival... s-so, uhm...”

“Ah, gotcha. I’ll go and buy some, then...”

You sisters are a public menace... You’ve completely ruined this poor woman’s supplies...

Brunhild’s stores were running low on supplies due to festival preparations. Stuff like that was usually provided by outside merchants, but Aer had literally just set up her café branch, so she hadn’t had time to contract suppliers and such, either.

Luckily, I could use **[Gate]** to shop in other cities around the world in a matter of seconds, and I had **[Storage]** readily available to stash the perishables in, too.

I guess I just needed to head out and buy some stuff...

“Guess I’ll go, then...”

“Oh, Touya! I’ll come too!” I was about to step through my newly-conjured portal when Lu suddenly stood up and started removing her apron. That was a relief, really. I didn’t know what the best foods were, so she’d be a help.

Sue and Sakura watched as Lu walked over toward me.

“Darn it, Lu beat me to the punch...”

“I’d go with you too, Grand Duke... but my tummy is quite sore...”
Sakura leaned back in her chair, hands resting on her stomach. She really ate too much... She didn’t have Yae’s fortitude.

Speaking of Yae, the gluttonous samurai was finally taking a break from chowing down. She was just sipping at some tea instead. Lu, on the other hand, hadn’t eaten all that much at all because she was helping Aer prepare all the treats.

I figured I’d go to the alchemy lab later on and get some stomach medicine from Flora.

“Thanks for waiting, Touya. Let’s head off!”

“Mhm. See you guys in a bit.”

“Take care out there.”

Leen and Paula both waved me off. Everyone else smiled and waved, too.

Guess if Lu’s tagging along, I’ll hit up Regulus. I can buy some more coffee beans there, too.

I opened a **[Gate]** straight to Gallaria.



The preparations were well underway.

Originally, we planned to just have a two-day festival, but it ended up turning into a four-day affair. People didn’t just want to see one tournament, they wanted to enjoy more stuff in excess.

The finals for the shogi and martial arts tournaments were on the same day at the same time in the original schedule, and that just wouldn’t do at all.

Thus we amended the schedule.

■Day One

Opening Ceremony

Baseball Tournament (Preliminaries)

■Day Two

Baseball Tournament (Finals)

Shogi Tournament (Preliminaries)

■Day Three

Shogi Tournament (Finals)

Martial Arts Tournament (Preliminaries)

■Day Four

Martial Arts Tournament (Finals)

Closing Ceremony

That was basically how things were going at this point.

It would still be difficult for participants of one tournament to visit another, though.

A lot of other nations also asked to get involved in the celebrations.

Originally, it was just going to be members of the alliance, but Palouf wasn't a member, so we couldn't be seen to give them special treatment. That was why we'd sent written invitations out to members of foreign royalty that we had neutral or friendly relationships with.

We'd sent out letters to Hannock, Felsen, Ryle, Xenoahs, and Elfrau.

As for Eashen, I'd sent a letter out to Tokugawa Ieyahsu, since I'd never met their emperor. Besides, I knew that Ieyahsu was the one really running the show anyway.

If I was honest, I'd sent out those letters assuming that it'd be trouble if they didn't get an invite... I didn't expect anyone to show up... But each and every one of the invited royals took me up on the offer and decided to come.

"They probably thought that if they didn't come they might hurt your feelings... and risk you storming in there with one of your Frame Gears..." Nikola nodded slowly as he gave me his opinion.

You seriously think I'd do that?! Those countries would also be bringing their own knights and talented individuals for the tournaments. The king of Felsen himself even planned on participating in the martial arts one...

He sure was a crazy collector of weapons, if I recalled correctly... A real meathead, too. It was kind of funny to me, given that he was

supposed to represent Felsen, which was known for being magic-oriented. He didn't match the image at all.

Still, this was just supposed to be a little festival... Now we had global VIPs coming in from all over the place.

I wasn't really worried about security or anything, we had that covered... but I'd be less poised to intervene in personal squabbles between members of royalty.

For example, if the beastking of Mismede met up with the king of Felsen after the tournament... It was possible that if they fought in the tournament, the loser might hold a grudge and retaliate.

Then again, I highly doubted that it'd come to that.

They were hiding who they were during the participation, so they'd have no lost honor if they were defeated. Conversely, they'd have no gained honor if they won. It was a situation devoid of any gamble.

I briefly considered having the tournament champion fight against Moroha... but I figured that would probably trample on their happiness. And frankly, I wanted the event to go as smoothly as possible.

Chapter I: The Beginning Of The Festival

“The overlord is coming...?”

“Yes... Him and his stupid face...” Sakura pouted, as was usual whenever her father came up.

He’d cry if he saw you like that, you know?

Their father-daughter relationship was as one-sided as ever.

“I should warn my mother... Tell her to hide...”

“No, no... Come on now... Let’s not treat him that way. You need to at least meet him.”

“Hmph...” Sakura quietly sipped her tea. The overlord was a little... overbearing, that was true... but I didn’t want to cause any trouble with him. He was just the typical doting dad, really.

“As for me, I’m fine with my brother coming, but... my grandfather may cause trouble...” Hilde let out a little sigh.

Oh... The old man’s coming too? He was the only person in the world other than me who’d reached gold rank as an adventurer.

He’d probably go tame if I showed him some swimsuit photos or something... He’d be a lot easier to deal with than Sakura’s dad.

“My elder brother will be coming to escort Ieyahsu-sama, he will. It has been a while since I have seen him, it has. I look forward to it!” Yae smiled to herself, seemingly content. Her brother wasn’t just here as a guard, since he also planned to participate in the tournament. There were also several Eashen fighters coming to test their mettle.

“Man, this festival sure got out of hand quick...”

“I think it’ll be fun, don’t you? Oh yeah, Auntie Lana and our cousin Emma are coming over, too.”

“Not your uncle?” I remembered that Elze’s uncle was pretty nervous when it came to being around members of higher social class.

“He won’t be coming. I’m pretty sure he’d faint where he stood and never get back up if we brought him somewhere as fancy as a castle.”

I agreed with what Linze said. It was a shame but it was how it was. Hell, he’d probably get unlucky enough to bump into the emperor of Refreese, his own ruler. He’d probably have a heart attack.

Things were going to be super busy on the opening day, that was for sure... Especially for me. I dreaded to think of the number of times I’d have to cast **[Gate]**. Still, it probably wouldn’t take too long... I just needed to arrange to meet each world leader in a designated spot.

Members of the alliance participating were:

Belfast

Regulus

Refreese

Mismede

Ramissh

Roadmare

Lestia

Lihnea

Including Brunhild, that amounted to nine nations in total.

Then there were the countries that weren’t part of the alliance, but we were still well-acquainted with. These nations included:

Eashen

Xenoahs

Palouf

Felsen

Elfrau

Ryle

Hannock

Seven in total.

Lastly, there were the nations we didn't really have anything to do with:

Egret

Horn

Nokia

Three in total.

The world as we knew it was composed of these nineteen nations.

Technically, there was also Palerius island, as well as the tribes from the Sea of Trees, but they weren't areas that were formally recognized as nations. There were also still people living in the fractured remnants of Yulong and Sandora, but those places weren't really countries anymore either.

Ultimately, representatives from every nation in the world would be gathering in Brunhild... To be honest, I was kind of worried. I'd definitely overdone it here. Still, there was no going back.

I just hoped everyone could have some fun.

Guess I'll give it my all, then! This is pretty hype!



The day had finally come.

I'd been going from country to country in order to pick up the relevant VIPs.

The nobles and royals had gathered in my castle, and for the most part, they seemed to be getting along. Some of them had never met in person before, so it was a bit of a casual chance for them to get to know one another.

They were made to disguise themselves, so at a glance, they'd look like nothing more than regular people. That being said, they still stuck out a little bit in the way they carried themselves. It was only natural due to how they'd been brought up, and I didn't think it'd be a huge deal. Still, they definitely had something in them that just made them look regal.

"Grand Duke... How does this badge work, exactly?"

The young king of Palouf spoke up as he pinned a little star-shaped badge to his chest. He was dressed in plain clothing, which made him look like a regular little kid you might see walking around any regular old town in the world. He really did look completely unremarkable...

"You just need to channel a little bit of your magic into the star. The spellstone inside will turn from red to yellow, alright? Then, your appearance should change to the disguised form. Like this, see?"

"But, Your Highness... Ernest doesn't look any different to me at all."

The young king's sister, Lucienne, tilted her head slightly. His badge had indeed turned yellow, while hers was still red.

"That's because you're wearing a badge, too. People wearing badges won't see the illusions, so they can know who they're talking to. If you remove your badge and look at the king of Palouf, you'll see what I mean."

The princess followed my instructions and removed her badge, her eyes widening in shock as she looked over at her brother. He likely

looked like a complete stranger. I was also wearing a badge, so the disguises didn't work on me either.

"The star also has a protective function, so listen carefully. If you pour extra magic into it, it should turn green. While the badge is green, it will be able to sense if you're in danger. Should you come to any harm, no matter the cause, the badge will warp you back to your guest room in this castle. Please make sure the star remains green throughout the festival, and don't take it off, either."

We'd given badges to the guards charged with protecting their heads of state, as well. But those guys had been instructed to keep their badges yellow, since they'd end up being warped away from any danger if it was set to green. There'd be no point in them being there if they couldn't protect their monarchs.

Those participating in the tournament, like the Beastking, were asked to keep it set to green outside of matches. There weren't any matches on the first day, so that much was fine. Jutaro and Lyon weren't exactly high standing citizens, so they didn't need the disguises, but they still received badges so they could tell who everyone else was.

"Ah, right, please take this little guy too..." I called a small white puppy out of a summoning circle. I didn't want to give out smartphones to people who weren't in the alliance, so everyone in that category got a familiar to follow them around instead.

"If anything happens, just talk to this guy. He'll be able to contact me. He's also a lot stronger than he looks."

"Thanks! Oh, he's so cute!"

The king of Palouf squatted down and gently pet the puppy's head. The puppy responded by happily wagging its tail. It wasn't actually a dog, it was a wolf pup. More specifically, it was an infant Snorra Wolf from the frozen wastes of Elfrau.

Rachael, Duke Rembrandt's daughter, was standing across the room from us. She was carefully looking at the Snorra puppy with curious eyes. It looked to me like she wanted to play with the puppy like the young king was, but she didn't want to approach because I was there. *Damn... I really did go overboard with her... Guess I can't blame her.*

I said goodbye to the Palouf party and made my way across the room. Rachael immediately walked over to the king and his sister, and they started playing with the puppy. It went just as I'd expected...

I'd finally finished explaining everything to the royalty in the room, at the very least. Some people had returned to their guest chambers, but for the most part, everyone seemed to be getting along. They were probably taking advantage of the fact that they could freely talk to foreign nationals in a relaxed environment.

I left the rest of the royal greetings to Yumina and Lu before opening a portal to the Silver Moon Inn in the castle town.

I entered the dining room and found Elze and Linze eating their breakfast amongst many others. They were seated next to their Aunt Lana and her children. There were seven in total, including Emma. Emma was the eldest daughter, and she was around my age. The entire family was eating breakfast together, except the eldest son, who was independent enough to go off on his own.

"Ah, Touya. Is everything sorted?"

"For the most part, yeah. How're things here?"

"Things are fine, yeah. Nobody here needs any disguises, so it's been pretty chill."

I nodded to Elze and then greeted both Lana and Emma. There were a few people from Reflet eating their meals too, like Barral from the

weapon store, and Simon from the general store. I waved to them and they returned the gesture with smiles.

All our invited guests were going to have their food and board covered by the national treasury. Most of the people staying in the Silver Moon were people we'd asked to come.

"Hmm... Where's Dolan? I don't see him anywhere."

"Ah, Dolan is helping Micah in the kitchen. The inn is totally booked, so there were some staff shortage issues..." Linze explained the situation to me.

Geez, I guess things really are getting busy around here... I wonder how it's going in the other inns.

"When does the festival start, again?"

"Around eight. So, about an hour from now. We'll do a formal opening ceremony, greet all the guests, and then put on some mock battles in the northern training field. We're gonna try to make it flashy and all that."

"The northern field... Are you gonna use Frame Gears?"

The northern training field was different from the standard field our knights typically used. It was a more spacious area far away from the castle, and we used the area to run Frame Gear field tests. For the most part, only authorized people were allowed to access the field due to how dangerous it could be. We'd installed a powerful barrier on the northern field to prevent any damage from spells or bullets from escaping a certain area. Our testing often had a... large area of effect, so the barrier was necessary to ensure that no bystanders ended up hurting themselves. Frame Gears were kind of too massive to keep secret, so they could be seen training in the field from a distance.

During training hours, a lot of the townspeople had started coming to watch the Frame Gears clash. It had become a bit of a regular thing for them, and they seemed to like it a lot. That was why I thought a Frame Gear demonstration would be entertaining enough for our international visitors.

“After that, we’ll do the first baseball rounds. Both stadiums are hosting two games, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. That means today we’ll get four matches in. Those games should decide who’ll advance to tomorrow’s games.”

“Have we decided who’s playing against who yet?”

“Nope. We’ll be doing a lottery draw to decide that in a bit.” There were only eight teams, so it wouldn’t take long. The lottery was actually one of the events I’d chosen to pad out the fun a bit.

Brunhild’s team was led by Logan from the knight order, but I didn’t really have much to say about the team in general. It wasn’t especially strong, nor was it particularly weak. Really, it all depended on who we ended up getting as an enemy... since all the other teams seemed to have more specific strengths and weaknesses. Either way, it would probably be fine so long as everyone enjoyed themselves.

I handed out a few discount coupons to Lana and her kids. They could be exchanged at the festival stalls for 50% off select purchases. Then, I waved goodbye before warping off to the schoolhouse.

“Whoa! What the heck?!” I stared in disbelief at the crowd of cats gathered in the schoolyard. There were tri-color cats, spotted cats, black cats, white cats, tiger-striped cats... Cats as far as the eye could see. And they were all staring at Mr. Mittens... He stood atop a mandarin box, holding his sword skyward.

“My dear furry friends! Today is a day for meow and you! The very peace of the town rests in our paws! Begin the paw patrol, my feline eyes and ears!”

“Meow! Meow!”

“If you see something suspicious, then keep tabby-tabs on them, got it?! If anything happens, run to the nearest guard and bring them to the incident! Then, get meowwta there!”

“Meow! Meow! Meow!”

“The cats that fight for the sake of mankind! Mankind that gives its lifeblood to the cats! The heavens cry! The earth cries! The cats cry! They shall bear witness to our kitty-cat chivalry! Glory awaits those that work hard today! One dried tuna for all, I say! One for all!”

“Meooow!”

The cats all scattered in various directions, dispersing into the town. His leadership was certainly... incredible. It was almost too good to be wasted on cats, honestly. Then again, the dried tuna probably had something to do with that.

“Ah, meow liege. Here to purruse the area?”

“Well, I guess. But it looks like you’ve got everything taken care of here.”

“But of course! I am the purrfect guardian for both this town and milady’s mother! For I am Mr. Mitt— Uh... D’artagnan!” *Wow... He actually got his own name wrong. That’s kinda funny... Oh right, I gotta warn him.*

“The overlord of Xenoahs might want to visit Fiana while he’s here...”

“I already got the litter scoop from the princess! Should he behave insolently in front of Lady Fiana, I have permission to slay him where he stands!”

“Isn’t that a little much?!”

That'd cause an international incident, Sakura... Forgive the old guy already. I'm seriously starting to feel sorry for this guy. He just wants his daughter's love... Sheesh.

I kindly asked Mr. Mittens *not* to murder the overlord, lest political destabilization emerge as a result.

I sighed quietly and checked my smartphone. Doctor Babylon had sent me a mail, so I decided to return to the castle. Things seemed to be progressing smoothly enough.

Once I made it back to the castle, I found Kohaku, Kougyoku, Sango, Kokuyou, and Luli waiting to greet me.

"My liege, we're sending out our own subordinate animals to keep an eye on the streets as well."

"Gotcha. Lemme know if anything weird happens."

Kohaku sent out dogs and mice, Kougyoku dispatched several tiny birds, while Sango and Kokuyou dispersed many tiny snakes into the urban sprawl. They'd be extra security for us. Obviously, we couldn't make much use of Luli's subordinates, since she governed dragons. Luli herself would take to the skies, allowing a bird's-eye view of any incidents in town.

I passed through the castle gate and noticed a group of people from Ramissh heading down the road into town. Her Holiness the Pope was among them. *I guess some of the foreign envoys are already checking the castle town out...*

The pope noticed me and began to approach, there was a priest walking with her. *Oh! I know you... It's Phyllis!*

After everything that went down in Ramissh, Phyllis became a cardinal. She was also the only person aside from me and the Pope herself who had met God Almighty.

The two of them had their star-shaped badges on. I was pleased to see that both badges were green.

“G-Grand Duke... Do you know when He will be arriving...?”

He...? Ah, that can only mean one person... God Almighty! I’d informed her a little while ago that he was going to descend for the festival, and she ended up getting a little panicked about it. Thankfully, she’d calmed down a bit since then... But not completely, it seemed. There was nothing I could do about that.

“I don’t think he’ll be coming down today. He contacted me recently, so I think he’ll be here from tomorrow on. Don’t worry so much, I’ll let you know when he’s here.”

“D-Do you think he remembers me...?” Phyllis turned to me and sighed slightly. She looked concerned.

“He will, you know? He isn’t senile just yet, you know?”

“Wh-Whoa! Don’t just appear out of nowhere like that, Karen!” I jumped as my annoying sister appeared from nowhere to answer Phyllis. *You need to stop doing that! I’m gonna have a heart attack, you scared the pope and Phyllis, too!*

“I’ll be opening up a consultation office in the church today, you know? I can’t wait to solve people’s problems! I’m gonna show them my skills!”

Hmm... That sounds great and all, but the way she’s putting it is making me uneasy... I quietly hoped she wouldn’t cause any issues.

“Well, let’s head off! The lost lambs need us, you know?”

“A-Ah, wait, Lady Karen!”

“A-Ah, s-sorry, Grand Duke! W-We’ll see you later!”

Karen grabbed Phyllis and the pope and started dragging them toward the town. Their guards started to hurry after the three,

clearly confused. *I wonder if it's alright to treat a foreign representative like that... Damn it, Karen. You're technically royalty here, act a little more like it!*

I didn't worry too much, though. They were incredibly safe so long as they were around her. That girl was scary when she wanted to be.

A few more groups headed into the castle town, and it was finally time to begin.

The clocktower in the middle of town struck eight, and Babylon launched several fireworks into the airspace above.

Sousuke, who was positioned in the clocktower, began to play his violin, sending out a tune across the entire town. He was playing the Pomp and Circumstance Marches by Edward Elgar.

I'd heard that the song was known as The Land of Hope and Glory in the United Kingdom, and was beloved there to the point where many regarded it as their second national anthem. It was somewhat funny to me that such a song was now being played in another world.

Personally, I wished for Brunhild to become a "Land of Hope and Glory" of its own... I smiled quietly, then approached a microphone connected to the clocktower speakers. It was time for the festivities to officially begin.



The first day was well underway.

Business was booming, the mock battle between the Frame Gears went swimmingly, and the streets of the castle town were now bustling with life.

There were all kinds of stalls lining the streets, and wonderful smells were mingling in the air. I wanted to try some festival food...

We had guards from the knight order patrolling and watching out for crime, and a few Belfastian and Regulusian guards were here to enjoy the festivities too. On top of that, we had Mr. Mitten's cats, and the subordinate animals of my Heavenly Beasts scattered around. Security was all but guaranteed.

I didn't really have any need to do any patrolling myself, so...

"Guess I'll enjoy myself a bit!"

"That sounds good to me. The world leaders have their badges and guards, so we can take it easy..." Leen was walking by my side, wearing her usual gothic lolita outfit and wielding a black parasol.

The others had gone to join their own families... Sakura was a little bit irritated when the overlord tried to talk to her, though. She was probably trying to keep him from visiting Fiana. That guy was really hopeless.

Leen had offered to spend some time with the beastking of Mismede, but he wanted to walk around on his own for a bit, so she decided to accompany me instead. Leen was fairly well-regarded in Mismede, so she'd invited some friends over to the festival, but they hadn't arrived yet.

Paula was toddling along behind us as well, but she occasionally got held up by excited children who wanted to poke and prod at her.

"Hm...?" I glanced over to the stage by the clocktower and saw a swarm of attractive young women fawning over Sousuke.

...Are you doing an impromptu piano concert or something?

"He's certainly amazing... I've never heard a melody so beautiful in my life."

Even Leen seemed enraptured by the music. I wondered if the bewitching nature of his music was his own brand of divinity... He was wearing pretty gaudy clothing, almost like a court musician...

Actually, he basically was our court musician, when I really thought about it...

He was playing a French tune on his piano, a fairly simple melody.

Though, as plain as it was, it went without saying that Sousuke's skill surpassed mine by leaps and bounds. It certainly came naturally to him, but that wasn't too surprising... *He's a god... If he wasn't a god, I'd totally be better, I swear!*

I wanted to keep on listening to his song, but we just walked past him and headed to one of the stadiums.

There were four matches to be played today, two in each stadium. Two in the morning, and two in the afternoon.

The matchups were like this:

Stadium One

Morning: Brunhild vs Lestia

Afternoon: Mismede vs Refreese

Stadium Two

Morning: Belfast vs Roadmare

Afternoon: Regulus vs Lihnea

Seemed simple enough to me.

After the mock battle earlier, we'd hosted the lottery that determined who would be playing against who.

We were up against the Knight Kingdom of Lestia... Their team was offensive-focused, but that didn't necessarily mean they had a lot of heavy hitters. They were the kind that slowly ramped up points to maintain an advantage.

Logan said he was confident that Brunhild's batters were more well-rounded and capable than Lestia's.

The first match was already underway when I got there. The score was still evenly matched at 0-0. They were up to the second inning, and Lestia had just finished pitching.

I looked into the stands and saw the beastking with Mismede's team, and the emperor of Refreese with his team as well. They were keenly watching the proceedings.

Mismede would be going up against Refreese after this, and the winner would go up against whoever won here. It made sense they'd survey the game.

I looked down into the stands and saw the knight king of Lestia sitting a little bit away from third base. Hilde was sitting to his right, and their grandfather was sitting to his left.

On Brunhild's side of the stands was old man Naito. He and his men were enjoying some beers and laughing to themselves.

People who worked in the knight order and the castle were given one day during the festival off in order to enjoy themselves. I wanted them to take it easy for a while, after all. There weren't a lot of opportunities for them to have fun like this on vacation days, so I let them seize it when they could. But obviously, not everyone could take the same day off, so they had a rota that meant some staff was off during day one, some during day two, and so on.

The only events on the first day were the baseball matches, so the people who got that day off probably drew the short straw... Still, I was glad to see that they were enjoying themselves.

"Ah, milord. Patrolling?"

"Just looking around for now. Everyone enjoying themselves?"

"Aye! This is a festival in a town that we ourselves built, you know? Of course we're having fun!"

Usually, the old guy didn't do much to stand out, but he seemed to be in unusually high spirits. We probably had the booze to thank for that. Naito was in charge of construction and agricultural developments, so he was probably really proud of what Brunhild had become.

I built the foundation of this place, but they were responsible for building on that and modeling it. The town wouldn't have made it nearly as far as it had without them. No, the entire country needed them.

I aimed a grin at them, ordered myself and Leen some popcorn and drinks, and we spent some time enjoying the match together with Naito and the workers.



"What a shame..."

"Yeah... If only we'd gotten that last point..."

Lestia had won against Brunhild with a final score of three to two. It wasn't like Brunhild was a worse team or anything, it was just the way the match had gone... Sometimes victory was just circumstantial.

The players had tried their best, so I decided to bring them some snacks and drinks afterward.

The match between Belfast and Roadmare at the other stadium had ended in a win for Belfast. Apparently, their tactical play was superior across the board.

Mismede vs Refreese and Regulus vs Lihnea would be later on in the day. Then, the final matches between the winning teams would come the day afterward.

As we walked through the town, we saw the Palouf entourage eating in a corner café. The young king was there, as was his sister, Duke

Rembrandt, and his daughter Rachael. They looked to be enjoying their lunch.

I unfastened my badge for a moment and looked over at them. Their disguises made them look just like a regular old family. I was glad to see the illusions were functioning properly. Leen was also wearing a badge, but we had no need for the disguise functions, so ours were inactive.

“Yo, you guys eating?”

“Ah, Grand Duke! Yeah, we’ve walked around a lot, so we were taking a break...”

I greeted them, and the young king offered us some nearby seats. Rachael was sitting opposite the young king. She held the Snorra pup in her hands and looked just about everywhere except for me. She definitely hated my guts...

“What are you guys gonna do this afternoon?”

“We were planning on seeing the Lihnea match. We’ve yet to acquaint ourselves properly with baseball, after all...” Princess Lucienne spoke up, smiling softly. They were probably asked to show up by King Cloud. I was glad to hear that things were still going well between them.

“We had a stroll this morning and certainly found no shortage of distractions... The time had passed by before we even noticed it, actually! This is a wonderful town. There’s much Palouf could learn from it...” Duke Rembrandt looked out into the streets as he spoke. I was extremely happy to hear that he thought so highly of the place.

“That being said, we found a place that was quite the money sink... It ended up being rather... unfortunate.”

“Ah...”

Duke Rembrandt grinned at the young king, who suddenly turned a little red. I wondered what he was talking about.

“Ernie here got rather addicted to the capsule toy machines in the market district... He turned them many a time. We had a lot of money, but Father still ended up telling him off because other people wanted a chance to use it, too.”

“I really wanted to get the Shining Count toy, that’s all...”

Rachael glanced toward something on one of the nearby chairs, and I saw a paper bag full of capsule toys. Seemed like he really did overdo it...

Wait, she just spoke to me! Did she forgive me already? I turned back to look at her, and she immediately averted her gaze. *Geez, come on...*

“Did you manage to collect them all in the end?”

“Uhm... I didn’t manage to get Grimgerde...”

“Oh? My Frame Gear?”

“Huh?”

The young king looked over at Leen with a puzzled expression on his face. I explained to everyone at the table that Leen was the pilot of Grimgerde, and they all looked on in surprise.

She might have been six-hundred-and-twelve years old, but she still resembled a young woman. She probably didn’t match up at all to the image in their heads. Grimgerde had unleashed a ton of destruction during the mock battle after the opening ceremony, so they probably thought the pilot was someone a lot scarier.

People knew that Leen was court magician of Brunhild, and the former clan matriarch of the fairies, as well as the fact that she was my fiancée... But not many people seemed to know that she was also a Frame Gear pilot.

“Darling, don’t you have one of those?” Leen quickly prodded her fingers into my side as she asked me that question.

“Oh, yeah... But, I mean... Ah, whatever...” I kind of wanted people to get the prizes the proper way... but he’d poured a lot of money into it, so I didn’t feel too bad letting him have this one.

I opened up **[Storage]** and took out a small black Grimgerde figurine. Leen then took it and handed it over to the young king of Palouf.

“Here you are. Make sure you treat it well.”

“Oh, thank you so much! Now I have them all!”

“Ahaha, not quite. We’ll be adding Lu’s Waltraute and Sakura’s Rossweisse next month, so the set will have new additions...”

“Ah...”

The young king frowned a little at my words, which made everyone giggle softly. *Probably shouldn’t tell him that Lu’s Waltraute has four variants... There are the attacker, booster, caster, and defender types... It’ll be hard to catch them all...!*

Olba would probably open a branch store in Palouf eventually... If he was patient, I was sure he’d finish the set.

We weren’t just adding Frame Gear toys to the collection either, there were new Behemoths going into the lineup too. Specifically, the Heavy Kong, Grand Boar, Power Bison, and Needle Rat from Palerius Island.

Still, I wondered if there’d end up being more of a demand for vinyl Behemoth figures, or scale model plastic Frame Gears... I wasn’t really sure if we had the kind of tech to mass-produce stuff like that... Especially since we’d need glue. This world didn’t really have plastic, so that might be an issue. Then again, magic beast bones were roughly similar in composition.

Hmm... But if we can do that, maybe we can figure out how to use magic to produce them more easily...

As I continued to sink into thought, Leen jabbed me in the side. *Ack! Fine, I'll save business thoughts for later.*

After we finished our meal, the Paloufean group decided to head off to watch Lihnea's match.

Alright, where should we go next...

"Ah... Uhm...!"

I turned my head to the sudden voice and saw Rachael looking down at the ground. She was tightly clutching the Snorra puppy to her chest. I wondered what she wanted...

"I-I'm sorry... About the other day... I... I understand just how far I have to go, now..."

Oh my... This is a far cry from the smug little girl I spoke to recently. Looks like she's been thinking things through. Actually, now that I look back on the day, she's been acting more awkward around me than hateful... Guess that makes sense...

"...It's alright. Just remember that you can't ever assume yourself to be the best. There are many people in the world who can surpass you in a lot of different ways. Even I have people that I can't match in certain fields, and I lose to them every day."

"Wh-What?! Really?!" It would be more apt to call them gods rather than people, but still... I wondered when I'd actually be able to win. I was probably a thousand or so years too early...

"I... have to protect Ernie... Even though I thought I was unbeatable... I still lost to you, so I've been thinking more about just how strong I actually am..."

She was starting to sound more and more miserable, and she let her head hang in shame. *Huh... Guess she's the one lacking in self-confidence for once... Geez...*

It wasn't like she wasn't strong. Her opponent was just an overpowered matchup... But I couldn't say that to her, since she wouldn't take it as sincere.

I was at a loss for words, but Leen suddenly opened her mouth.

"If you become strong, you'll be able to protect the king of Palouf, that much is true. But any strong knight could do that, couldn't they? You need to think harder, young lady. There's something only you can do."

"H-Huh...?" Leen's words prompted Rachael to raise her head.

"A king's life is a life of hardship and struggle. Sometimes it can be hard to face those things alone. That's why you need to be his rock. Sure, his advisors can support political and military matters, but you must be there to support his heart. You need to stay by his side, to worry alongside him, laugh alongside him, smile with him, and be there for him. You don't have to protect him with raw strength alone. You can become his support by being there for him on a personal level. That's something only you can do. You can become a shield that protects the heart of the one that matters to you... Just like me." Leen smiled and took my hand.

O-Oh geez, how embarrassing... Paula suddenly put her hands to her own face as if she was blushing. *Damn it, Paula, your mime skills are too good!*

"Can I really do that...? Can I become his shield...?"

"A good woman can be just that for her man. She can become an irreplaceable person in his life. If you ask me, you're the only one who can do that for him. I'm sure of it... Only you can support the king's heart, and walk by his side. Don't lose hope."

“...O-Okay!” Rachael smiled up at us both and ran back to rejoin the others from Palouf.

She certainly made a speedy recovery... I grinned a little as I saw her cling to Ernest’s arm.

“That was some interesting advice you had for her there.”

“Well, it wasn’t entirely my idea... It was just me telling her what your sister told me, Darling...”

So this was Karen’s doing... No wonder it sounded so sappy... But man, she really has a way with words. It’s actually a little scary, honestly.

“So, where shall we go now, Darling?”

“Ah... My arm...”

Leen tugged at my arm as if to guide me down the street. I was seriously embarrassed...

“Hmm? You don’t want to lock arms with me, Darling? I may not be proficient at clinging to you... Do you think you’re the only one shy here? I’m the one summoning the courage to take the initiative... Shouldn’t you play along?”

“Ahh... I guess you’re right. Hm... There’s gonna be a puppet show in a little while. Wanna go see it?”

“As you wish, Grand Duke!” Leen smiled and gave a wink to accompany her half-joking response, and we walked off into the crowd.



The second day was well underway.

The baseball finals and the shogi placement matches were going on during this day. In the morning there’d be the semi-final matches with Lestia vs Mismede at stadium one, and Belfast vs Regulus at

stadium two. Then, in the afternoon, the winning teams would face off against each other in the final match.

There was also going to be a third-place match around lunch. We made sure the teams didn't get worn out, though. There were plenty of stamina potions on hand from Flora and the alchemy lab.

The shogi matches were going to be going on from morning until night. We'd had a startlingly large number of participants, more than we'd scheduled for.

Shogi did have time limits to the moves, but the rules were overly complicated. I decided that we'd just give each player a maximum of two minutes to make their turn.

We were able to enforce this through the use of magic shogi pieces that turned grey after one minute, and then black after two. It was pretty simple.

If they played the turn before the piece turned black, they'd be safe. Otherwise, they'd forfeit.

We also had an hourglass to show players exactly how much time they had left.

Honestly, I wished for the tournament to go on a proper schedule, but there were way more participants than we'd anticipated. Shogi was a game that cared not for age or gender, so all kinds of people decided to give it a try. I was sure that there'd also be people who would want to draw out their turns as long as possible so they could think.

Either way, the preliminaries would be concluded today, and the winners would end up going against each other and the special players I'd invited on the third day.

The hall room was crowded with participants and spectators alike when I arrived. A few of the invitees, like Dolan and the young king of Palouf, were already keenly observing some of the matchups.

I personally didn't care all that much about shogi, so I was content just to walk around a bit.

One of the participants had intentionally flipped the table over when he was about to lose, but we had specialized shogi boards that recorded the positions of each piece. His attempt was completely in vain... Disqualified, of course. Some people really had no manners at all.

Old man Naito was in charge of overseeing these matches, but he was clearly hungover from his partying the previous night.

"Yeah... Pretty sure he's still a little drunk, actually..."

"It still seems that everyone is enjoying themselves, it does. Look over there, an older man is happily playing with a younger opponent, he is..." Yae pointed over toward what was probably a grandpa and grandson playing a match of shogi together. From the looks of things, the kid was giving the old man a serious run for his money.

"Oh, that reminds me, Yae... Is it fine for you to be away from Jutaro?"

Yae and Hilde had ostensibly signed up for security detail with their families, so I was curious why Yae was here instead of walking around with her brother like Hilde was with her own.

"My brother will be working hard in the tournament tomorrow, he will. That is why he has been training in the grounds since this morning, he has. I do not wish to bother him, so... I... I thought I would join you today, Touya-dono..." Yae blushed slightly as she interlaced her fingers together. I certainly had no reason not to go along with her, so I was flattered.

“Alright, should we check out the baseball stadiums? It should be about time for the teams to be decided.”

“A-Ah... W-Well, in that case... could I go and change my clothes first, could I? I would like to meet you at the Silver Moon, I would...”

“Huh? Sure, I guess...?”

Yae nodded and began making a beeline for the castle. I didn’t really think there was a need for her to change... But she was probably self-conscious about being sweaty from her morning training.

I started heading toward the Silver Moon, but stopped when someone tugged hard at the hem of my coat. I almost tripped over.

Just as I turned around to complain, I noticed it was the tiny little boozehound gremlin... Suika. Just what the hell did she want?!

“...Just what are you doing?”

“Touya broooo... The god of alcohol needs your helppp... Money... Money me now... I need money... Karina took my booze! Gimme money! It’s a sin not to get smashed during a festival! Auuugh!”
Suika started to loudly grumble as she clutched on to me.

Let go already! Your nose is running! I figured since she was the god of alcohol she could make her own booze out of nothing, but that wasn’t the case. Since it required divinity, she wasn’t allowed to do that down here. As far as her powers went, she had advanced analysis allowing her to identify any booze she drank, and she also had the ability to remain sober no matter how much alcohol she ingested. She didn’t really have much in the way of practical powers, it seemed.

Then again... I wonder if she can use the drunken fist style... That’d be scary...

“Don’t you have a magic cup that can produce infinite liquor? It’s one of your sacred treasures, isn’t it?”

“Don’t gimme thaaat! That cup can only make sacred wine! I’m sick and tired of drinking iiit, aaagh! I don’t wanna drink that! I wanna drink the different stuff in this festival! There’s stuff from all over here! C’mon! C’mon!” Suika started stomping her feet like a child. I could understand her feelings, but I wished she acted a little more adult... She was supposed to be a divine being, after all. Did she have no pride as a goddess?

They said that you couldn’t win an argument against kids or drunks, and sadly she was both.

Ah crap... People are looking at us...

I sighed quietly and squatted down so my eyes were level with hers.

“You can drink after the festival is over. If you stay sober and help the maids out, we’ll arrange it so you can drink some varied stuff afterward, alright?”

“That’s all you had to say, Boss! I’ll drink nothing if it means I can get what I want later! Promise! I’m going sober from now on!”

It was honestly a little weird to see someone who resembled a child talking about going sober. But frankly, it was whatever. I was just glad she wasn’t gonna be annoying anymore.

“Alright, then. Is that fine? Just... take this with you for the time being, okay? It should tide you over.” I opened up **[Storage]** and took out one gold coin, and a bag of beef... Or rather, dragon meat jerky. Then, I passed them over to Suika.

The one coin would be enough of an allowance for her, and I was sure she’d spend it on booze. Cheap or pricey, alcohol was alcohol to her.

According to Suika, even the taste didn’t matter all that much. She said that even bad booze had its own nuance and flavor, which was something I couldn’t wrap my head around. I was honestly curious

about why she wanted to savor the various drinks at the festival when she'd probably tried them all before anyway, but I couldn't be bothered to give her the time of day. Still, with that much, it'd be fine for her to last the three days. At least that way I didn't have to worry about her hounding me again.

"Woohoo! Thank youuu! Thanks so much, Big Bro!" Suika gave me a quick peck on the cheek and toddled away rapidly in the direction of the liquor store. Buying her affection sure didn't take much...

After leaving her behind, I headed on to the Silver Moon, which was far more crowded than usual.

It was just before noon, and the dining hall was absolutely packed with diners. The guests were being kept waiting even longer than they were on the first day... It was probably understaffed because Dolan had gone to watch the shogi matches.

It wasn't usually so busy, so just a couple of wait staff were enough to handle the crowds on an average day.

I poked my head into the kitchen and saw Micah desperately working on dish after dish. She was clearly fighting her own war in there.

"Hey there. Need any help? Pfft."

"Ah, come in, come in! I'm really busy, sorry! Could you take this order to table three, please?!"

I had actually been joking when I said that, but it looked like she'd seriously taken me up on the offer. She immediately thrust a tray of soup, meat, and fried veggies on me. *What, seriously?! There's no way I can say I was kidding now... I'll look like an asshole!* I took out the order to table three, lining up the dishes in front of the guests. As I finished up there, another diner raised their hand and waved me over.

"Hey there, get us a tato stew, a veggie salad, and a grilled polo."

“Huh? Ah, right... Tato stew, veggie salad... Grilled polo. Got it.”

Alright, that’s the order memorized... Wait a second. I’m not a waiter, damn it!

I returned to the kitchen and gave the order to Micah. She then handed me another tray and sent me back out.

Wait a second, damn it! I tried to speak up, but I was silenced by the intensity of her gaze. She was practically screaming at me with her eyes. If this was a warzone, then Micah herself was a terrifying warlord.

Not even I could stand up to her in this place, grand duke or not.

I sighed in defeat as I took the next order out to the designated table, internally lamenting my own fate.

“Milord?! What are you doing...?”

The voice came from Lanz, one of our knights. He’d just walked into the room and spotted me. *Oh, is he here for lunch? Or maybe he’s here to see Micah... Either way, this is my out!*

“Lanz! I hereby give you a royal order!”

“H-Huh?! Y-Yessir!”

“For the rest of today, you need to work here at the Silver Moon! You’re under command of Micah! I’ll let the knight order know. You need to take orders and carry out dishes. This is a vital duty, Lanz!”

“Huh? But... Ah... Yessir!” Lanz gave a salute and then dashed into the kitchen. I was pleased to see how dutiful he was. Made sense, since he was from Lestia and all.

Almost immediately he came out wearing an apron, carrying dishes to tables and taking as many orders as he could.

Don’t think badly of me for this, Lanz... Just use it as a chance to get closer to Micah.

I didn't want to be used for waiting tables anymore, so I hightailed it out of the Silver Moon and left Lanz to his fate.

I waited near the entrance for Yae and sent a text to Lain about what Lanz would be doing for the rest of the day. It seemed like he wasn't really needed for training or anything, so it was all good.

Dolan's gonna be busy tomorrow too... Micah should definitely post a part-timer notice in the guild or something... That'd probably get her some extra hands.

"I-I am sorry for making you wait, I am."

"Ah..." I turned to the voice and saw Yae. She was wearing a beautiful yukata, and her hair was tied up.

Her yukata was light purple and had flowers printed up the side, they were morning glories. She wore geta sandals and had a blue obi tying it all together. In short... she looked stunning.



“Y-You said this would be a festival, did you not? So I asked my mother to have my brother bring it, I did... D-Do you like it, do you?”

“Ah... It really suits you, Yae. I don’t know if I can put it into words, but... you look great...”

“A-Ah, is that so, is it?”

There were other people wearing yukatas in town today as well, that was because Brunhild had a lot of immigrants from Eashen living in its land. In this world, yukatas were traditionally worn during Eashenese celebrations.

However, Yae looked the most at home in her yukata of anyone else I’d seen all day. *I’m probably biased since I love her, though...*

“I had to leave my katana behind, I did.”

“Well, that makes sense...”

A katana and a yukata... It wouldn’t have looked all that good if she’d gone for a more boyish look this time around. I was glad Yae had opted to be more girly, rather than looking like a lordless samurai.

“Do not worry, do not. I am concealing a dagger in my bosom.”

Of course she is.

“Alright then, let’s head toward the stadium. The finalists have probably been determined already, come to think of it. The consolation match is probably going on.”

“Ah, very well... A-Ah... Touya-dono...? May we hold hands, may we?” Yae nervously held a hand out to me, and I took it with a firm grasp. We were both clearly embarrassed, red flushes on our faces, but we happily continued on through the town.

I honestly had no idea that this event would attract so many people. According to the day one report, a bunch of people had set up tents

outside town because they couldn't get accommodation. We probably needed more inns if we were gonna do this again.

We've got a lot of accommodation as it is, so... maybe we should just have special inns that are only open during the festival period?

We arrived at stadium two in time to see the ongoing consolation match that would determine third place. The results of the qualifier match were being displayed on a large signpost.

"Stadium one's winner is Mismede, and stadium two's winner is Belfast..."

"That means the consolation match is between Lestia and Regulus, it is." That seemed about right. We entered the stadium to find the match at its third inning. The score was still zero on both sides. Regulus was up to bat.

Just as we sat down, a cheer erupted from the batter's box. I looked up and saw the white ball soaring through the sky. *Oh, it's heading this way...? Oh, it is! Oh, it landed.*

Laughter and joy rang out through the stadium in a flash. It was a spectacular home run!

The batter raised his arm into the air as he walked the bases. Regulus had a lot of heavy hitters, probably the best ones in the entire world.

The score was now at zero to two. The match seemed like it was just getting into the swing of things, and it felt like the other team could make a comeback. We both decided to watch the game for a while...

In the end, Regulus continued to hold a two-point lead and Lestia just couldn't catch up.

Thus, third place had been determined.

All that was left now was the final match between Mismede and Belfast in stadium one.

“I wonder who will win, I do.”

“Mismede’s definitely better in terms of physical strength, but they’ll need more than that to win. Belfast has a pretty well-rounded team. They have a decent offense, defense, and speed.”

The audience began filing out and heading over to stadium one, it seemed like most of them were planning to hit the final match too.

We went that way as well, bumping into the Belfast party on the way. They were wearing their badges and probably looked like regular people to onlookers.

Yumina was speaking to her father, who had apparently been at the shogi hall until recently.

“You’ve come to see the finals, right?”

“Yes, but I did want to keep on watching the shogi... Touya, my lad... Next time we do something like this, please adjust the schedules better. It’s been a rather hectic day for me.”

I nodded quietly toward the king. *Frankly, you should be thankful I managed this... It was a last minute plan I pulled outta my ass!*

Seemed like the king of Belfast wanted to see as much of the shogi as he could due to the fact that he’d be participating on the following day.

Duke Ortlinde stayed in the shogi hall, since he’d be participating in the next day’s tournament round as well. I wondered if Sue would get bored of hanging around him and seek us out...

Yae and Yumina were chattering together when suddenly...

“Uncleee! Touyaaaaaa! Oh! Yumina and Yae too!” Sue came charging toward us at full speed, accompanied by the Ortlinde family butler, Leim. She scuttled up my back like a bug and held on tight.

She definitely showed her more childlike side when she acted like that... Still, it was adorable.

“So you came after all... Did you get bored of watching shogi?”

“Yes, I did! It was just people doing boring stuff and clapping! Father was just watching the game board and mumbling to himself the whole time. No fun at all...!” Sue puffed out her cheeks and pouted. She was certainly more action-oriented. It was probably annoying for her that shogi was more of an analytical game. Either way, her joining us was fine by me. I was fine with us all checking the baseball out.

Sue descended from my back and turned her attention to Yae.

“That’s so pretty, Yae! Is that a key mono? Uh... Kim oh no?”

“This is a yukata, it is! We wear them during festivals in Eashen.”

“It’s certainly beautiful, though... Shall we all prepare yukatas of our own for the next festival?”

“I like that idea, Yumina! I wanna wear one, yeah!”

“Then I will learn more from my mother, I will. This one was made by her, it was. Linze-dono may be able to help in that regard, as well.” I idly listened to their girl talk as we walked toward the stadium.

The final showdown was about to commence.



They dashed. Second base... then third... and a reckless charge for home plate!

The ball was pitched like a laser beam as it hurtled its way toward the catcher. Mismede’s runner was contending with Belfast’s catcher, and it was looking close as hell...

A cloud of dust was kicked up between the two as the runner slid toward home base... The entire crowd was ripe with tension, falling

silent as they waited for the call. The silence was shattered by the referee's voice.

"SAAAAAAFE!"

A cheer burst out from the crowd. The Mismede players ran off the benches and began to lift up the runner who had managed to reach home plate.

The finals had been in a fierce tie for the last nine innings, with scores trapped at one each side. But now Mismede had finally brought it home with a final score of two to one.

Thus, Mismede had won the world's first international baseball tournament. Belfast came in second place, with Regulus in third.

Confetti and silver tape streamers were launched overhead, celebrating the team's victory.

Man, that was a great match... Both teams really gave it their all.

Thunderous applause rang out into the stadium, drowning out any other sound. After that came the awards ceremony.

I was the leader of the host nation, so I presented a commemorative trophy and shield to the team captain, and then medals to the other players.

I worked off a system similar to the Olympics, in that the type of medal differed based on rank. Third place received hihi'irokane medals, second received mithril medals, and first place received orichalcum medals.

Usually, in the Olympic Games, the participants would receive a cash bonus from the host nation, but I left that up to their home countries this time.

The trophy and medals were all engraved with "First International Tournament" on them. Even if there were nations that didn't

participate, it was still the first one... I was hoping that more countries would participate in any future celebrations like this.

The audience was still excited, and they continued to lavish praise in the form of a standing ovation to the participants. I decided that as a special bonus, the winning team would be allowed to celebrate their victory in Brunhild Castle. I'd bought food and alcohol out of my own pocket, and decided to treat them to a lavish feast. I hoped that they wouldn't pop the corks off the champagne or anything... I didn't want the room becoming a mess. Then again, I didn't think this world had that kind of custom, so it would probably be fine.

Thus, the baseball tournament came to a close without any major incident.

It was almost four in the afternoon, and the shogi placement matches were still in full swing.

Yae, Yumina, and Sue tagged along as I headed back to the shogi hall. There weren't as many people in there as there were in the morning. Most of the winners and losers had probably already been determined.

"Oh, Father!" Sue quickly singled out Duke Ortlinde and headed toward him.

"Well, seems Mismede won the baseball tournament, hm? Word already spread here."

"Bit of a shame for Belfast, indeed."

"Well, there is meaning in both victory and defeat, Brother. Second place is more than enough reason for us to be proud of our homeland."

The match really could've gone either way, and everyone watching the finals knew that as well. It was a well-earned victory and a close match.

“And how are things here?”

“Rather well, I must say. There are some formidable players in the running here... Frankly, people I’d rather avoid matching up with, even.”

It was interesting to hear him express concern like that. Including the invitees and the people who had passed, there were a total of thirty-two participants in the third day’s games.

Provided all went smoothly, a winner would be determined by the evening... Still, I was curious about how the pressure of playing several consecutive rounds would affect peoples’ performance. It would’ve been good to increase the time between matches a little, but we had way more participants than I had expected... They’d just have to put up with it.

Our plan was to use a screen to broadcast the matches, so more people could get to see it. I’d be helping Monica and Rosetta out with the screen installation before the matches started.

It was gonna be tough work, but it had to be done. My smartphone began to vibrate, so I took it out of my breast pocket.

“Ah, please excuse me...” I waved off Yumina and the others before using **[Teleport]** to reach a church on the outskirts of town.

“S-So he’s coming tomorrow?! Wh-When?”

“Midday, I think. Could be sooner or later though, it really depends.”

I was talking to the pope about the message I’d received on my phone. Her breathing suddenly became ragged and unhinged... She was really freaking out. *She gonna be okay? She’s pretty old, so I’m scared she’s gonna have a heart attack or something... Isn’t she like... sixty, at least? Well, it’s not like I’m gonna ask... That’d be rude.*

“Wh-What shall we do, Your Holiness?”

“Calm yourself, Phyllis. There’s nothing to be gained by getting ahead of ourselves...”

The templars accompanying them had no idea what we were going on about, so they just kind of stared blankly for a bit. Only Cardinal Phyllis understood the implications of what was being discussed, which caused her to lapse into an anxious set of motions. I guess it made sense. I was the outlier here for treating a visit from God Almighty so casually.

Karen muttered to herself as the two Ramissh ladies fussed with each other.

“This is kind of strange, you know? The god of worlds coming down into the mortal realm... That hasn’t been observed in millions of years, you know?”

He came down once already, though... Well, technically that was more like an avatar... so it would be more appropriate to say that the last couple times I encountered him in this world, it was just a portion of him... His power must be seriously immense.

I didn’t know if he was going to do the avatar thing again, or actually hop into a human body and come down like the other gods did.

“I-I hope we don’t upset him... If we wound up being responsible for the apocalypse, I...”

“That’s not gonna happen. He takes a non-interference policy, remember? Please don’t get worried about him coming down, he’s just here to relax a bit.”

I tried to calm Phyllis down before she got ahead of herself again. I wondered if she’d really be alright... She definitely wasn’t behaving how I’d expect a cardinal to behave.

“Besides, my sisters and I are gonna be here, okay? Nothing will go wrong.”

“A-Ahh... Actually, that whole matter with the servile god is still up in the air, so... I hope he’s not mad at me, you know?” Karen sighed and folded her arms.

He might be... It was your job to take care of that NEET god, wasn’t it? And now he’s gone and gotten himself absorbed by that wicked godbeast, and he’s completely out of our hands...

They might’ve been able to help me defeat it during the last encounter, but Karen wound up making her and Moroha late to the rendezvous...

The wicked godbeast hadn’t done anything since then. That was good news in some regards, but it was also concerning. The weak Phrase constructs were coming through here and there and were typically defeated by high-ranked adventurers.

But yeah... I was dawdling too much. I really needed to find a way to repair the world boundary.

It was technically possible, I was sure of it. The Reverse World that Old Man Palerius was studying was likely the key to it all.

My current running theory was that one of the Gollems from the Reverse World might have been brought to this world by one of Palerius’ experiments... And it might’ve had some kind of special power.

It was possible that by using that power, Palerius could’ve repaired the barrier. But I had nothing but a hypothesis to go on, there.

As I pondered to myself, I suddenly heard a loud noise... Like an animal yowling in the distance. *Is that a cat?*

I turned around and saw dozens of cats stampeding towards the church. *Wh-What the hell?!*

They continued to meow over and over again as they leaped at me. It wasn’t as if they were attacking me, it felt more like they were trying

to get me to follow them... But to where? I used a **[Gate]** to grab Kohaku from the castle. She could understand the cat's language, after all.

The cats immediately calmed down in the presence of the White Monarch.

"So, what's up?"

"Ah... It seems that Mr. Mittens is engaged in a duel... They're asking that you stop him and break up the fight."

"That cat's having a duel?! With who?!"

"...The overlord of Xenoahs."

YOU'VE GOTTA BE KIDDING ME!

The saber and rapier clashed, sending sparks flying. Mr. Mittens unleashed a flurry of blows toward the overlord. But the demonkin would not be so easily beaten. He used his saber to parry the jabs and moved in for a horizontal slash. However, Mr. Mittens was an agile cat, and he deftly avoided the blade.

"Enough of this, Sir Cat!"

"No way I'm putting this fight on paws! I can't at all say I'm fit to guard Lady Fiana if I can't even manage this much!" Mr. Mittens grinned a Cheshire grin and narrowed his eyes.

Both of them approached each other on the empty school grounds as the sun set in the distance behind them. They kicked off the ground in tandem, shortening the distance between them... They were both poised to land killing blows, when...

"[Slip]!"

"Gwah!"

"Meow?!"

My magic made them both fall on their butts instead. Those two were completely stupid.

I let out a sigh as the two people... Or rather, person and animal, rolled around and nursed their wounded tailbones.

“Just what do you think you’re doing, Overlord?”

“A-Ah! Grand Duke?! I-I promise you there was no ill intent, I was merely trying to ascertain the strength of the cat defending Fiana!”

Fiana was the headmistress of the Brunhild Castle Town School, and Mr. Mittens was a cat that had been summoned by Sakura in order to act as a helper.

He said he wanted to gauge the cat’s might, but something about that seemed fishy to me. It was more likely that he was just jealous of the fact that Mr. Mittens had the attention of the daughter and former lover that spurned him.

Still, he didn’t seem to be going all-out. He didn’t even use any magic.

Sakura’s magic was intensifying rapidly, probably due to the divinity she was receiving due to her proximity to so many gods. I hadn’t been able to verify it, but I strongly suspected that she outclassed the overlord now in terms of magical potential. It was possible that Mr. Mittens, being one of her summons, was also becoming unnecessarily powerful due to association with her magical biorhythm.

Either way, Mr. Mittens was probably at fault here for agreeing to duel a world leader.

Sure, the overlord was stupid for fighting too, but the whole situation was just so messy I didn’t wanna think about it.

“Wanna explain yourself, pussycat?”

“M-Meow! The princess told me not to hold back my claws when the overlord appeared! I was only following orders! She told me to try and break his legs!”

“Whuh?!”

The overlord clutched at his chest and fell to his knees. ...*C’mon man... Melodrama much?*

Clearly, he’d been emotionally damaged by his daughter’s lack of care. But this guy was a total wreck, honestly... I was a little bit frightened by the sway Sakura seemed to hold over him.

If Sakura and I ended up providing a grandchild for him... Then, that child might someday turn to him and call him “annoying” ... He’d probably die of a heart attack there and then.

“...Did you finish him, Mr. Mittens?”

One of the classroom windows opened up and Sakura poked her head out. She seemed pretty nonchalant about the fact that she’d just ordered a supercharged cat knight to break her dad’s legs, but... well... she did have the blood of the overlord in her, and she was technically a demon...

The moment she appeared, the overlord sprung up from his slumped position and charged toward her.

“Farneeeeeese! I’m finally here, please! I won’t be here much longer! Let me talk with Fiana just for a little!”

“Mother is busy right now. Leave, Overlord!” Sakura slammed the window shut with a thud.

Couldn’t you have put that in kinder terms...? The guy’s basically gone pale from shock!

“Grand Duke... Does... Does my daughter hate me, perhaps?”

“Nah... I’m sure she’d have been a lot crueler if she really hated you that much... I can’t say it for sure, but... I don’t think she despises you.”

“You dare say that this isn’t cruel?! My very heart threatens to burst forth from my chest!”

To be honest it was hard to tell what Sakura was thinking most of the time. She probably didn’t hate him so much as she just didn’t care all that much about him. She definitely didn’t seem to want to speak to him. They didn’t have a father-daughter relationship when she was growing up, so she didn’t have any time to form a bond with him. She didn’t really view the overlord as her dad, more of a weird old man that just started following her around.

There was definitely a vast distance between the two of them... And I wondered if I’d be able to close it at all.

“I know how the situation looks, but Fiana and Farnese... It broke my heart to abandon them, I promise you... I did it for the sake of giving them a happy, safe life... She was born without the horns of my lineage, you understand? Even though she had the overlord’s blood, she didn’t have the horns... There was simply no way the nobility of my country would allow her to take a seat in my palace... They would’ve made her life a living hell. Fiana’s, as well. I wished for her to stay an arm’s length away, as a regular girl... If I could turn back time, do it all again... I would be a stronger man, and I would’ve let them stay... I would’ve protected them! But it’s beyond my control now, what’s done is done.”

Geez... That’s pretty rough... Surely Sakura can understand that there was more to it than him simply abandoning her and her mother...

To be honest, Sakura probably wasn’t avoiding the overlord out of scorn for what he did, she probably just didn’t want to dig up painful memories for herself and her mother.

Even if that was the case, it made it no less difficult to deal with him. Plus, I was often put in the awkward position of getting him to leave.

I sighed quietly, wondering how to usher him away when Fiana walked out from the school with Sakura in tow.

“A-Ah! Fiana...! It’s been so long...”

“Indeed it has, my overlord. I hope you find Brunhild to your liking...” Fiana greeted the glum demon with an earnest smile, causing Sakura to do a shocked double-take.

Sakura, your jaw just totally dropped open.

“I’m sorry for the trouble and grief my daughter must have caused you. Please find it in your heart to forgive her.”

“Ah, n-no... It’s okay... It was really my fault, I showed up out of nowhere... I came here earlier, but Farnese turned me away...”

“Is that so?” Fiana turned a surprised glance to her daughter, causing Sakura to look away in shame. Seems like Fiana hadn’t been told anything about it.

“...I simply thought he would be an obstacle to your daily duties, Mother... You were quite busy preparing for the assembly...”

“Assembly?” The overlord quirked his brow slightly.

Ah yeah, even I forgot about that. “She’s talking about how they’re gonna invite all the kids in town to the school tomorrow. They’re gonna tell stories and have little events, so even illiterate kids can have fun.”

“Oh...”

Books weren’t very cheap in this world, and a massive amount of people weren’t capable of reading. Storybooks weren’t very common for kids, either. Stories were often told by traveling bards or professional storytellers, so the art of telling a story was still kind of

theatrical in most nations. There were also plays, but usually, they were a little bit expensive for kids to pay.

Plus, a majority of the plays had been performed so many times that most people in the world already knew the stories.

I had a few eBooks downloaded on to my phone, so I employed Linze and Sakura's help to localize them into this world's tongue.

We had to change certain terms though, this world didn't have stuff like cars or traffic lights, for example. Fortunately, we didn't need to change much of the fairy tales I'd downloaded.

I'd wanted to do another puppet show, but we didn't really have much in the way of staff... Linze had to attend to her family, anyways.

As I was thinking to myself, the overlord suddenly spoke up.

"Alright! Let me help with this assembly, please!"

He suddenly blurted out a befuddling sentence before patting himself on the chest.

...Man, what is this guy thinking...? I'm not gonna call him annoying out loud, but there's such a thing as too eager.

"No, we couldn't possibly ask that..." Fiana attempted to get out a gentle rejection, but the overlord butted in and continued talking.

"Really, it's no problem. You're busy, aren't you? I'll help you out, far better than this pussycat, here."

"Meow dare you! I'll have you know that I'm an esteemed helper!"

Proverbial sparks flew from the glare shot between demon and cat. I wondered if I'd need to make them fall on their butts again. *Still, this might be a good chance here... They could start patching up their relationship.*

In the end, he was only helping his daughter and ex-lover out, so it didn't count as a foreign national aiding Brunhild or anything... Plus, he was wearing the disguise badge. This seemed like a good idea, it could possibly even warm Sakura up to him a little more.

Alright, guess I'll smooth this along a little. I turned to Fiana and spoke up.

"If he wants to help, I say let him. We are a little understaffed, after all."

"Be that as it may..."

"Plus, he could learn something that might be put to use in Xenoahs as well, you know? If you think about it, it's like a cultural exchange."

"That's right!"

The overlord nodded quickly as if to suggest that was his plan all along. He was certainly a piece of work, but I admired his enthusiasm.

Sakura looked a little bit frustrated and decided to disregard what I said.

"Mr. Mittens will do more than enough for this... He can even read books..."

"Sure, he can read books, but he constantly meows and replaces words with cat puns, doesn't he?"

"Meow dare you say such a thing! I'm pawsitive that I can read just fine!" Mr. Mittens yelled out loud, completely proving my point. I decided to test him.

"Alright, then say the following sentence. 'I can speak just perfectly, I'm not kidding. Perhaps you were just wrong, friend.' Say it back."

"Ha! I can speak just purrfectly... I'm not kitten around! Purrhaps you were just wrong, fur-end! Oh... Oh no."

Thus, my point was fully proven. Mr. Mittens fell to the ground, defeated. Sakura pouted.

“Look, even putting all that aside, there’s no reason to say no to an offer for help. You want the assembly to go well, don’t you Sakura?”

“I do... Fine, he may help...” Sakura reluctantly accepted the offer, causing the overlord to break out into a huge smile.

“Just make sure to stay out of mother’s way... And don’t scare the children, or teach them anything odd...”

“I promise! Trust me!”

Fiana looked between the two with a gentle smile on her face. *It’s a little subtle, but they’re almost acting like father and daughter... Oh, that’s right.*

“Fiana, could you stand over here a sec?”

“Hm? Here?”

“Yep, and you stand here, Overlord. Sakura, you go between them. Stay still, okay?”

“Okay...?”

I made them stand next to each other with Sakura between them, then crouched down a little and brought out my smartphone.

“Alright, say cheese!” A little sound came from my smartphone as I took a photo of them.

All I had to do was pull some paper out of **[Storage]** and use **[Drawing]** to print it out.

It was possible to use **[Drawing]** to print stuff without a photo, but having a visual reference on hand made the results more accurate. Doctor Babylon said she was going to make an artifact that worked similar to a photocopier that other people could use, but for now, she was focused on interdimensional stuff.

Once I finished printing out three copies, I handed them to each of the people in front of me.

“Goodness...”

“Oh... Amazing!”

“Hmph...”

The three of them each reacted very differently to the photographs in their hands.

“G-Grand Duke, may I take this picture home with me?!”

“Yeah, go ahead. Use it to remember today.”

“Thank you so much...!”

The overlord was practically jumping for joy, but Sakura’s expression was much more subdued. ...*Please don’t cut him out of the photo, he’s literally standing right there.*

Sakura didn’t go that far, thankfully, she just made a grumpy expression toward her overexcited dad. I could understand her feelings at least a little... He was jumping around like a little kid, but from what I’d heard the guy was meant to be over 100.

Fiana was glancing down at her copy with a warm smile on her face.

Oh, right...

I took out one of the white mass-produced smartphones from **[Storage]** and handed it over to Fiana. She seemed like she deserved one, given that she was basically in charge of the country’s education. Sakura would be able to show her how to use it.

The overlord asked about the phone and, when I explained it, asked for one as well. I told him that it was only for Brunhild government workers and members of the alliance... so he said he’d have Xenoahs join at once. *Pick a better reason to join than wanting a phone, old man...*

Xenoahs had been pretty isolated for a long period of time, so it was probably a good thing if they opened up more to other nations... Still, I seriously had a problem with “I want a smartphone” being the reason to kickstart all that. The overlord claimed that Xenoahs was actually looking toward opening up talks with other nations ever since Yulong collapsed, but I wasn’t quite sure if I trusted that...

Whether or not Xenoahs would join the alliance wasn’t a decision I could make alone, we’d figure all that stuff out after the festival.

Given recent events, we’d have to consider inviting other countries like Hannock, Felsen, Ryle, Elfrau, and Eashen... Ah, I couldn’t forget Palerius Island, either.

We were probably going to have to change the name at this rate. It would all depend on whether or not the nations actually accepted our invite, though.

I let out a sigh as I considered just how complicated things were going to end up becoming.



The third day of the festival had begun.

The shogi tournament had begun in the morning and was well underway.

We had four large monitors installed to project a total of sixteen games at once to a wider audience.

We sat watching from afar, eating miso soup and boiled potatoes. We were seated on some chairs near a couple of food stalls. The food tasted really good. The radishes were crisp and the potatoes were soft, creating a delicious dynamic. Eashenese cuisine was definitely my preference, in the end.

“The shogi finals and the fighting tournament preliminaries are today, right?” Yumina, half-way through a potato, turned to ask me that question.

“Yup. Belfast, Regulus, Refreese, Palouf, and Roadmare are all participating in the shogi finals. Mismede, Felsen, Lestia, and Eashen are participating in the battle tourney.” *Oh yeah... I guess old man Baba and Yamagata are representing Brunhild, too...*

The knight king of Lestia was probably the guy who’d end up winning, but given that magic was allowed, the beastking could use his [Accel] to give his foes a real run for their money.

This town was full of adventurers even on regular days, so it wouldn’t surprise me if we had some strong no-name contenders showing up as well. There’d probably be a few people who joined up just to test their own abilities too.

“What’s your plan for today, Touya?” Lu noted down exactly how those potatoes were steamed so well before turning and asking me a question.

“Well, I’ll have to announce the winners for the shogi and battle tourney later on... So I guess I’ll be going around to a few places today. Ah, I gotta stop by the church later, too.” I wasn’t too worried about the fighting tournament since Moroha and Karina were there acting as referees, and Nikola had a keen eye on the shogi tournament as well.

“What about you two, anyway? Belfast and Regulus are participating in the shogi finals, right?” Knight Commander Gaspar was sort of representing Regulus in the fighting tournament too, but he was there incognito.

Having a knight commander enter a free-for-all tournament probably wasn’t the best look for a nation, so it made sense to have a disguise.

If I recalled correctly, General Leon of Belfast would be participating too. It'd be fine, I figured. They wouldn't get found out.

"Father and his friends will be participating in shogi, that's true... But I needn't worry about them. My plans are free."

"That's right. We both have free time today... So we thought we'd spend it with you." *Ahh... That's why you guys brought me out here this morning. Well, that sounds good to me.*

We paid for our food and handed over the empty bowls back to the stall owner, then headed out on a walk.

Lu and Yumina both snuggled up close to my sides, Lu taking my right, and Yumina taking my left. It was a bit difficult to walk with them clinging to me like that, but... They were happy, so I had no real cause for complaint. *There's no way I could just shake them off or something...*

They'd both certainly grown since we met, they were a little taller... But their petite builds still made them look incredibly young.

Though, from what I could feel against my arms... There hadn't been much growth in an important area...

To be honest, onlookers would probably think of us as an older brother and his little sisters.

"Touya?"

"Hm? Ah, it's nothing." These girls had sharp senses, I couldn't let them know what I was thinking about.

"Oh." I suddenly heard a tune and realized that Sousuke must have been playing his piano at the clocktower. It was a western song...

My taste in music had been heavily influenced by my grandpa, so I liked a lot of the oldies. I liked music from the 1950s and 1960s the most. In turn, I ended up showing Sousuke those kinds of tunes, and he took to them well.

The song he was playing right now was a popular rock and roll piece from the 1950s. The original was so well-liked that they were included on the golden records on the Voyager spacecraft, which was then sent out into deep space.

There was this movie that had the protagonist ride this car that was also a time machine. He ended up playing the same song on a guitar during a school dance in the past. That was a pretty good movie.

Everyone listened to the song and moved their bodies to the rhythm, it was a sight to behold indeed...

I looked a little closer and noticed more people on the stage than just Sousuke, they were playing string and percussion instruments alongside him.

“Huh...”

“It’s a travelin’ band. They were passin’ through and thought to join. They accompanied him yesterday, too.” One of the nearby food cart operators spoke up to explain the situation to me. I recognized the voice so I turned to see who it was... It was none other than the god of agriculture, my uncle Kousuke. *Wait, why are you here?!*

“Ain’t it obvious? Sellin’ food made with my produce. I wanna get in on the festival too, y’know?” Kousuke grinned a little. The food cart had curry... Or rather, cully, and rice. Next to it was a big box of fresh veggies. I noticed a young man next to him, studiously peeling carrots and potatoes over and over again.

“Oh! You’re uh... Charon, right?”

“H-Huh? I-I mean... I am Charon, yes... But...” He looked at me, unsure of who I was. That was probably because of the badge. It didn’t affect Kousuke, but it was turned on right now so I was in disguise. I quickly shifted it to a deactivated state.

“Y-Y-Your highness?!” Charon went wide-eyed and confused as he stared me down.

He was one of the knights who joined our order around the same time as Lanz.

He came from a line of herbalists, which made him pretty knowledgeable about plants and natural medicine. That’s why we assigned him to Naito’s charge and had him help with agricultural development.

“This lad’s plenty promisin’, you know that? S’why I asked him to help me today.” That made sense. I could definitely understand why Kousuke said that. During the knight exam, he managed to survive because he could identify which foods were safe to eat, and which plants he had to avoid.

I wondered if that made him a beneficiary of Kousuke’s divinity as well, then... It definitely couldn’t be a bad thing to be favored by him.

“Is it just you two running this cart, then?”

“Nope. We got that Lakshy lass helpin’ out as well. She’s out fetchin’ the seasonings. She can’t be around open flames, after all... So the cookin’ is down to us.” Lakshy was an Alraune, a demonkin descended from a plant-like lineage. It made sense she’d need to avoid fire. She was also part of the agricultural team, so she probably had the god of agriculture’s blessing as well.

I gotta admit, I wanna try some of this... But I already had the potatoes earlier...

Before I forgot, I moved in to whisper into Kousuke’s ear.

“Ah, right... This afternoon in the church...”

“Karen already told me ‘bout it. Don’t worry about me, alright?”

“You sure? It’ll have been a while since you guys met, I’m sure...”

“Been a couple thousand years, but fer a god that ain’t all that different from a day or two. If I wanna meet him, I’ll go meet him. Don’t need to, though.” *Well, fair enough. If that’s how he sees it, then that’s how he sees it.*

We left the main square and looked over the stalls that lined the various streets.

“Ooh...”

“This totem is a popular icon from northern Regulus.” Lu explained the little wooden figure I was looking at. It was a sculpture of a Thunderbear holding a weird fish in its mouth.

My world also had craftsmen who made stuff like this, but they’d been on the decline in recent years...

“Ohh, this is...”

“This is a little doll used as a charm. It’s said to symbolize happiness for an entire family line.” It was a doll that looked kind of cylindrical. You could pop it open horizontally, and a smaller doll would be inside it. Then you could pop open that one to reveal yet another smaller doll inside, and so on... Until there was a teeny tiny doll in the middle that didn’t open.

It was certainly similar to something I’d seen before. Specifically, those traditional dolls from Russia. This one was a lot simpler in design, though.

Going around the stalls and seeing the various wares was pretty interesting. There were trinkets similar to stuff from my world, as well as stuff that looked completely different. We spent the entire morning wandering around and aimlessly buying this and that.

Around lunchtime, we decided to head towards the church.

The church was located a little out of town. It was on a small hill and was managed by two people from Ramissh, a priest and a pastor. But currently, two more people from Ramissh were there.

They'd been wearing the badges I'd given them to mask their looks, but it was the pope of Ramissh, Elias Altra, and one of the cardinals of Ramissh, Phyllis Rugit.

There were people in the area who looked like adventurers, but they were actually just the templar guards of Ramissh going incognito.

Brunhild didn't really have any people who believed in the god of light that Ramissh preached, but given that Phyllis and Elias were technically preaching the word of God Almighty now, you could call me a believer too.

Still, I felt weird worshiping someone who was basically like a grandpa to me at this point, so I'd never really gone into the church.

We entered into the church and heard the pope giving a sermon about something that had happened in Ramissh.

Her story was called "The Miracle of Isla."

So the story went, the god of light had descended into the Holy City of Isla one year ago, and vanquished the evil spirit of darkness that was trying to consume the city and its people.

The story ended up being spread around the world because there were several eyewitnesses, including those that didn't even subscribe to the Ramissh faith.

Many people thought it was nonsense, but a large number of people couldn't deny what their eyes had shown them.

That being said, the story was actually based on a trick I'd pulled.

Ramissh had been doing good since then. Apparently, all the ill-intentioned people who had done all manner of bad things in the name of god had all been cast out of positions of power, too.

The pope finished her tale, and the crowd slowly dispersed.

I was about to walk over and greet them, but she and Phyllis actually ended up dashing towards me.

“G-Grand Duke! Is he here already?!”

“Uhh... No... Not yet.” The two of them seemed disappointed by my words.

“Relax, you guys. He’s coming soon, alright?”

“I am here, actually.”

“Wuh?!” Someone next to me started talking, which scared me.

I turned around and saw that it was none other than God Almighty, the master of worlds himself. He had a gentle expression on his face and was dressed plainly as ever. *Woah, that scared me! You gods have gotta stop just popping up like that!* “Gah! Don’t scare me like that. Wait, how long have you been here?”

“Hmhm... I used a little teleportation magic a while ago. Ah, it has been a while, you two.” The god of worlds addressed Her Holiness the Pope, and Cardinal Phyllis. Both of them immediately started to bow down to him in a frenzied panic, but he stopped them in their tracks.

“Please consider your social positions, ladies. It would be improper for ones such as yourself to bow to an old man. I do not mind it, so it is fine.”

“A-Ah, okay!” Most people wouldn’t know their status due to the badges they were wearing, but both of them were too fussy anyway, so this was fine. Moroha and Karen had told them to stop revering them too many times to count.

Still, given that he’d come here using teleportation magic meant that he wasn’t here as an avatar right now. He’d likely humanized himself like the rest of my divine family.

“Um... Touya? Who’s this?” Yumina tilted her head slightly in confusion. Lu had a puzzled expression on her face as well.

Oh geez... How do I explain...

“Good day, my dear children. My name is Mochizuki Shinnosuke. I am young Touya’s grandfather.”

Shinnosuke, huh... That’s pretty straightforward... You even have the Japanese term for god right there in your name... What’s with “young” Touya, though?

I smiled awkwardly as Lu and Yumina opened their eyes wide in shock.

“Touya’s... Grandfather? But how can that be? Touya’s from another world...” God Almighty brought his finger to his lips and gave a knowing wink towards them both. They seemed to understand the meaning of his motions. I hoped that they’d realize he meant he was the same as Karen and Moroha.

“A-Ah, then... Please forgive me. I am Yumina Urnea Belfast. I am one of nine with the privilege of being Touya’s fiancée.”

“A-And I’m Lucia Leah Regulus! I too am engaged to Touya, sorry for our lateness in introducing ourselves!”

“Not a problem at all. Goodness me, you are both rather beautiful young women, are you not? Young Touya here must be quite happy, engaged to the likes of you.” He smiled gently towards them as they bowed their heads. *Heh, seems like they’re thankful for the compliments... They’re getting all blushy. So cute...*



“So you’re capable of using teleportation as well?”

“Ah, yes. That I am. I can use most forms of magic.”

“That certainly seems fitting with Touya’s family...” Wouldn’t surprise me if he has all attributes and next to no magical power limitations... Actually, he probably has no limits at all.

“Ah... World G—ramps... Gramps. Did you see Karen already?”

“Gramps? Aha... Gramps... I like that. Ah, Karen? Karen... Ah, yes! Of course, I know who you mean. She is my grandchild too, after all. I have yet to talk with any of them, but I am sure we will soon.”

Yumina and Lu gave each other a curious glance. Given how he was acting, that seemed fair.

They knew I was from another world, but they probably had no idea that this guy was the god to end all gods.

“I was thinking of looking around town for a little while after I talk a little with the pope today. How does that sound?”

“What about the church?”

“A-Ah, well! That’s fine! We’ll be open later in the afternoon, too!”

Phyllis nervously replied, while the pope nodded her head repeatedly. I wondered if they’d actually be fine... The two of them were certainly tense.

I wondered what they’d talk about...



When the world had only just been created, spirits and magic were already around.

They acted as limbs to the gods, forming the world’s contents and bringing forth many aspects of nature.

The spirit of the water filled the world’s oceans, while the spirit of earth created the land and soil. The spirit of fire caused volcanoes to

erupt, while the spirit of wind caused hot air to blow around the atmosphere.

The spirit of the forests raised trees and dense woods, while the spirit of light brought illumination to the world. The spirit of darkness brought night, and the peace of silence.

From the miraculous feats of these spirits sprung forth creatures linked to the primordial aspects of nature, and the world found itself populated.

Fairies, Heavenly Beasts, holy spirit trees, and so on... It was said that among the last of these creatures to be born were humans, along with demi-humans such as beastmen, dwarves, and elves.

The god of this world, satisfied with his creation, ascended back to heaven and left it to the newly born people.

This world was a paradise for the people to make all their own, so he thought better than to remain.

“But why did god return to heaven?” A little boy sitting on the front row asked a question after hearing Shinnosuke’s sermon.

“Because he believed that we should make this world into our own. If you rely on god to save you whenever there is strife, you cannot forge your own path. A child must become independent of his parents to become an adult.” In short, gods couldn’t interfere with the mortal realms of their own creation. That’s exactly why I couldn’t be reborn into my old world. My world didn’t have any method to bring back anyone from the dead, so it could only have been seen as a miracle.

If I’d died in this world, then resurrecting me might’ve been a possibility. After all, there were magical ways to resurrect people here. The death risk was much higher on average.

“The lord god on high has entrusted us all with this world. I am sure he would be happy to know that each and every one of us is trying our hardest to make this world a better place.” God Almighty looked over the crowd of people attending his sermon. He was wearing a priest’s robe that he’d borrowed from the pope.

“Do unto others as you would want done to you. Do anything you can, no matter how little. That alone is enough. Kindness is a solid foundation. All are equal in the eyes of god. Men, women, children, adults, princes, and paupers. We can all live full lives. That would make god happiest.” He bowed to the crowd before leaving the front area.

Huh... So the spirits really helped the gods form the world? I’ve only met that one in the forest and the spirit of darkness in Ramissh... I didn’t realize they were that powerful.

Did they lose their power over time, maybe? Or maybe they lost the power to shape the world after the gods didn’t need them to? They don’t seem all that primordially mighty now, at least...

Especially the spirit of darkness... I beat him pretty easily. Then again, apparently spirits are immortal, so he’ll probably come back eventually.

“Thank you for the sermon. It was fascinating...”

“Ah, not a problem at all. Typically I only have conversations with other gods about their difficulties, so it was nice to talk a little.” Elias and Phyllis were already gushing over god’s sermon.

“No, it was truly amazing! Thank you so much, we’ll ensure that future generations chronicle the tale and take it to heart!”

“Well... You may do as you wish, but I do not think it was all that interesting...” God Almighty smiled softly towards the pope. *You know, old man... You probably don’t realize it but you’ve basically just given this world a solid creation myth.*

“Where are you headed after this, gramps? I was thinking of introducing you to the others.”

“I am not quite sure... I was going to ask if you could let me stay here for a night, so I could meet the others this evening. For now, I would like to look around town. Could I get someone to guide me?”

“I’ll do it, you know?!” Karen suddenly appeared as if out of nowhere to butt in on our conversation. *What did I say about you gods and your instant transmission nonsense? Just show up normally for a change!*

God Almighty smiled toward Karen, apparently completely unbothered by her sudden appearance.

“It’s been quite a while, my dear. Are you in good health?”

“I get to have a pretty fun day-to-day thanks to you, you know? I’m gonna show you around, so don’t worry about it... How about you stop intruding on Touya’s date, grandpa?”

“Hmm? Ohh... I see. I did not realize I was intruding. Please forgive me, my children.”

“N-No, it’s fine...” Lu and Yumina both turned red in the face, waving their arms in a flustered panic.

Still, I was thankful that Karen was taking care of him now. Even if something happened, they’d be more than enough to look after themselves.

Plus, it went without saying that Phyllis, the pope, and the Ramissh guardsmen would be accompanying them as well.

Yumina, Lu, and I all left the church and headed towards the shogi hall. The first set of games had just ended, and the second rounds were all beginning.

There were a lot more people there than there were in the morning and a lot of people who'd already finished their games. The monitor displayed the names of the winners and losers.

"Uhhm... Aha, looks like things are coming along..." Barral and Simon from Reflet, the emperor of Refreese, and the doge of Roadmare had all lost their matches. Everyone except the Reflet citizens had pseudonyms listed, though.

"Ah, my father has been defeated..." Lu muttered to herself after noticing her dad's name up there.

If I recalled correctly, his enemy was the king of Palouf. It seemed like the kid was kicking ass.

I looked around and saw two people sitting on some chairs in front of a monitor. They were the leaders of Regulus and Refreese.

We approached the group.

"Good day. Shame about the bad luck."

"Oh, Touya! I actually had quite a bit of fun. I'd like to hold a tournament like this next year..."

"It's a shame that I lost, but I managed to learn a bit about my own shortcomings. I won't lose next time." The two of them didn't seem to mind their losses, so I was glad.

I looked to the monitor and saw a silver general tile being moved across a table. The monarchs both let out mixed tones in response to the sight.

"Who's this?"

"It's the match between the king of Belfast and the king of Palouf. It's a rather interesting battle."

Huh... I see... It kinda looks like the king of Belfast is having a tough time. No wonder he managed to beat the emperor of Regulus. I looked carefully as the young king moved his silver general piece...

“Isn’t it gonna get taken by the king of Belfast’s rook?”

“No, this is a tactical invitation. It’s a move that could be a trick, or destroy the balance of the game. If you don’t look with a keen eye, it could be seen as reckless...” I looked back at the monitor after the emperor of Regulus spoke. *Man... I really can’t follow this at all...*

The speed at which people in this world improved tactically was actually pretty incredible, but this was also a world that lacked much in the way of entertainment. That meant they could focus on their individual failings with little distraction, and keep on going until they overcame them.

Their enthusiasm was something to be envied, really. I was already completely outclassed by the top players in this world.

It seemed like the shogi tournament was still going to last a while longer than we’d expected... So we decided to go and see the combat tournament in the meantime.



In the arena, six fighters were mercilessly clashing against each other.

They were attacking, rolling, defending, dodging, slashing, thrusting, and jabbing at each other. One after another, they collapsed to the ground.

Any fallen participants were immediately teleported out of the arena where our trained medical staff could get ahold of them.

We had a lot of things installed in the combat arena to protect the lives of the participants, the teleporter was only one such method.

The last two participants standing clashed their blades. One was an adventurer with a greatsword, and the other was an Eashenese man wielding a katana.

I recognized the Eashenese man. It was Kokonoe Jutaro, Yae's brother.

We'd supplied the weapons for the tournament, but that didn't always help. Even with a blunted edge, a greatsword could inflict debilitating wounds or even death.

Well, so long as the death wasn't instant we'd be able to help the person recover. Plus I trusted Moroha as referee to stop the match before anything lethal happened.

Jutaro kept on nimbly dodging the blows from the greatsword.

The greatsword guy was the one who seemed to be putting the most pressure on his foe, but Jutaro was clearly looking for gaps. Just as I'd expected, he took advantage of a lull in his opponent's movements to lunge forwards.

He danced like lightning and struck his katana into the chest of the greatsword guy.

The man fell to the ground with a resounding thud and teleported out of the battlefield.

"Match over! The winner of the G Block is... Kokonoe Jutaro!" The audience went crazy with clapping and cheering as Moroha announced the victory.

Jutaro bowed his head before heading off towards the participant waiting room.

"He didn't even break a sweat..."

"My brother is skilled, he is." Yae proudly grinned and nodded towards Yumina's statement.

Yumina and Lu had accompanied me to the arena, where we'd met up with Hilde and Yae.

The preliminaries were going well. Half of the winners had already been determined. There were so many participants that we ended up going for a battle royale structure.

"Did the knight king... Did Reinhard already qualify?"

"My brother was part of the A Block, yes. He's downstairs in the waiting room watching the other matches." Hilde pointed down to where the winners were all socializing.

Oh, right... I guess Yae and Hilde's brothers might end up fighting each other... Which one should I cheer for? I can hardly cheer for them both...

"Anyone we know qualified as well?"

"Commander Gaspar, General Leon, and Baba did!" Dang, even the old guy did... I hope he doesn't overdo anything.

Still, it wasn't too surprising. The guy was a member of Takeda's Elite Four. I was sure he could even give Reinhard a run for his money.

"Ah, Touya... Look..."

"Hm?" I looked over and noticed a familiar face amongst the participants of the H Block.

It was a girl with slightly darker skin and pointed ears, with scales on her body here and there. She had two draconic horns pointing out of her head, and a thick tail around her back.

"Ahh... I didn't know Sonia was here." She was a draconic fighter, an adventurer. A friend that we'd met back during the Pruning in the Sea of Trees. She also helped us out against the heavenly emperor of Yulong a while back as well.

Apparently, she continued dungeoneering across the world as an adventurer, and she'd even been to Brunhild's dungeon islands a few times. I wasn't too surprised she was participating, since she started traveling the world in pursuit of martial prowess anyway.

That probably meant Rengetsu would be participating too. He was the staff-wielder with the bald head. If I recalled correctly, the two of them were traveling companions who had similar philosophies on battle.

I was remembering them fondly when the match began, and the arena immediately turned into a veritable melee.

Sonia smacked an ax-wielding man with her gauntlet, almost knocking him out of bounds immediately.

Just as he was about to recover from the staggering blow... A second, invisible impact sent him crashing out of bounds. He was disqualified immediately.

This was part of Sonia's power... And what a fearsome power it was.

In the end, Sonia was the winner of the H Block's warriors, and she carried on to the main contest. Leon from Belfast fought very similarly to her, but I had a feeling she might have been even more skilled than he was...

Either way, victory had a lot of factors to it beyond mere skill.

"I wanted to join as well, I did..."

"As did I..."

"C'mon you two... Don't get sad. We're needed here for the important act of keeping people safe, got it?" Yae and Hilde seemed downtrodden, so I put on a smile and reminded them of how important they were.

That was my outward reason, but in all honesty, I was worried about letting them participate in a tournament like this... I wouldn't let Elze do it, either.

They had the blessing of various gods shining on them, after all. I didn't want first, second, and third places being dominated by Brunhild. The event might've been seen as boring, or even rigged if that happened.

"Seems like the tournament's going fine, anyways... Let's look around a little more. Oh, maybe we could visit Sakur—"

Just as I was suggesting to the others about something to do, one of my summoned beasts deployed a telepathic message to me.

"...Sorry, something came up. I gotta bounce."

"Huh?" I was unable to answer their confusion as I used **[Teleport]** to leave the arena.

I landed in a back alley so I wouldn't cause any attention, before coming out into the main street.

I pushed my way through the crowd and saw a man wearing a black bandana. He was being followed by one of Kohaku's subordinates, a little mouse. That's how I knew it was the right guy.

I stood in front of the bandana-clad man.

"Somethin' wrong, jackass?"

"Yes. Please return the thing you have in your pocket."

"No idea what you mean."

"The stolen purse. Hand it over." The man clicked his tongue and sneered, before pulling out a knife and pointing it right at me. What a moron he was... He'd have had a better chance if he tried to flee.

He lunged, so I dodged the knife and grabbed his hand before twisting it and holding it upwards. I bent his arm backward, which

caused him to squeal out in pain and reflexively lose his grip on the knife. It fell to the ground alongside him when I let go.

“H-Hey, you bastard! The fuck?!” *You’re the one who started it.* I sighed as the little mouse pulled out the purse from the man’s breast pocket. It was made of very fancy material, certainly a pay grade above this ruffian’s.

According to the mouse’s message, he’d swiped the purse from a traveling trader. I was the closest one to the area, so I was fine to deal with it.

Some of our knights heard the fuss and came over to arrest the guy.

The man immediately started kicking up a fuss and tried to frame it as if I’d stolen his purse, but I used **[Recall]** to project an image of his crimes into the air, directly from the memories of the little mouse. Once he realized I was the grand duke of Brunhild, all his protests fell silent.

The knights then took the thief along with them. Then I ascertained who the purse actually belonged to in the first place. There was a lot of money in it, so I needed to be sure it got back to its rightful owner.

I used the mouse’s memories again to find out who the victim was.

I opened up my map and easily found the guy, he was in front of a stall just a little bit down the street.

I headed down there and saw a plump-looking trader arguing with an older woman. The mouse’s memories were in black and white, so I didn’t realize just how blindingly red and gaudy the merchant’s clothes were. No wonder the thief thought this guy was an easy target.

“Whaddya mean you have no money! Were you trying to dine and dash...?!”

"I-I wasn't! I just... I must have lost my coin purse, or maybe I was pickpocketed!" *Welp, better deal with this before it gets any worse... It could go south.*

"Excuse me. Is this your coin purse?"

"Hm? Ohh! I-It is!" I handed it over to him. *Thank goodness.*

I explained the situation to the woman who ran the food stall, and she happily took the payment from him.

"Thank you so much! You really did save me..." The man bowed to me. I was actually pretty curious about him.

His red clothes were really interesting, as was his turban. He was a plump fellow but he seemed in decent shape for a man who must have been in his forties. All of that combined, along with his black beard, kind of gave off the image of a stereotypical Arabian merchant. But more than any of that, what caught my eye was the color of his skin.

His skin was a darkish red, even darker than Sonia's. He was just... Reddish, it was bizarre. It made me want to ask...

"Excuse me, sir... Could you be one of the Red Fol... Er... Of the Arcana Clan?"

"Oh? You know of my people?" I knew it... The ancient clan that revered the color red... The people that sealed a Phrase beneath Belfast's old capital, and left behind a message... The ones that visited Elfrau a long time ago, too... I knew this guy was related to them!

After hearing the story from Elfrau's queen, I tried to find them, but I hadn't had any luck.

I had no idea what a person from the Arcana Clan would look like at a mere glance, after all. My magic wouldn't be able to find people I only had a vague idea about.

I noticed an amulet around his neck that resembled a Celtic coat of arms. That could've been a clue... It was certainly something tangible I could use for my **[Search]** spell, provided it was a family emblem or something.

"Ah... Well... If you're from the Arcana Clan, then can you answer a question for me?"

"Hm?" I used **[Storage]** to pull several printouts for him. They were photographs of the letters I'd found on the wall beneath Belfast's capital, during the first incident in which I encountered the Phrase.

It was my hope that he'd be able to read the lettering. I handed them over and he looked them up and down with a raised brow.

"These... These are words passed down in the Arcana Clan for years and years... There's almost nobody in the world who'd be able to read these."

"Damn... So you can't either..."

"That's not what I said at all, actually. My grandmother was a priestess of our people in the olden days, and she taught me the words. I'd say that around five people exist nowadays, myself included, who can read them." *That's not many...* Apparently, the letters were only used for the most important of texts, so they weren't utilized often enough for them to have been well-preserved. That made sense, even if it was a shame.

"Uhh... Let's see... It says... Our people, the Red Folk, record this history. The glimmering monsters spilled forth from the pit and made sacrifices of our people. As the city was about to fall into ruin, two tiny knights were summoned by our venerable leader. A Black Knight, and a White Knight. Through time and space itself, they launched the glimmering beasts. They repaired the pit and returned from whence they came. We left a glimmering husk here so that, should this incident ever repeat... This corpse may stand as warning.

Do not allow life to spill back into its husk, lest it rage once more..." I was mostly confused by what I'd heard.

The glimmering monsters were clearly the Phrase, and the pit they came from was probably a tear in reality.

But... I had no idea who these Black and White Knights were supposed to be... Also, that warning about not giving life to the husk was moot, since I ended up doing that back then.

"Where did you find this?"

"In some ruins beneath Belfast's old capital city."

"Fascinating... It was said in my clan that some of our people separated and migrated in that direction... These words were likely left behind by them." The Phrase had invaded Belfast over a thousand years ago. They probably left this message behind to warn the next generation... But then why was it buried and forgotten...? It was possible that they were just following instructions and gradually over time the information was lost... But the ruins were used specifically to house a dead Phrase, to seal one in there... That wasn't the main matter of concern, though.

What was written in the ruins was likely true, at any rate. The Phrase had invaded the capital and caused a major catastrophe...

Then they were saved by individuals who seemingly drove the Phrase back.

The Black and White Knights... They were the key to all of this. I wondered if they were a duo who had been called from the Reverse World... Or maybe they were literally just two knights.

The mystery was still in pieces, and I had no idea what most of it meant. It seemed like I had no choice but to go back to the Reverse World for more clues.

"Thank you so much, you really helped."

“Not at all, really. That money was vital to my operations in this country, so it would’ve been a heavy loss. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.” Apparently, the Red Folk, the Arcana Clan, had been nomadic until they finally settled on an island between Hannock and Xenoahs.

Apparently, the clan lived in harmony with the demonkin who were native to that island.

The merchant, who was named Polunga, left the island as a young man and became a wandering merchant. He’d been traveling the world ever since. His purpose in Brunhild was to acquire unusual goods that you couldn’t get anywhere else.

In order to thank him a little more, I introduced him to Olba Strand’s company. That place dealt in oddities a lot, after all.

I said bye to him after that, but I was still thinking about what he said...

“Two knights... Hmm...” Man, I really have no idea what it was talking about. Guess I can’t do anything with that info for the time being.

“Ah, hey! Touya!” I turned around and saw Yumina and Lu pushing their way through the crowded streets.

“Good job finding me.” I hadn’t teleported that far away, but the two tracked me down pretty fast. I asked them how they knew where I was, and they just kind of glanced at each other with an awkward expression.

“Well, how do I put this... Lately, I’ve just sort of... known? I’ve just sort of had a vague idea of where you are. Lu has, too...”

“It’s a little vague, yes... But I have a small idea in my head of where you are at all times... It’s the same for the other girls, I believe...” *Wait, what! When did you all get mental Touya detectors?! Is this because of my divinity? I guess it would only make*

sense for abilities like that to get stronger over time... Kohaku and the other Heavenly Beasts can do something similar.

Still... I'm not sure if I'm keen on having them know where I am at all times... Isn't that a little awkward? What if I was having an affair?! N-Not that I would, haha... "Where's Yae and Hilde?"

"They were more interested in the tournament. Elze joined them as well." They were the mighty trio of my household, so it made sense they'd spend a lot of time together.

Elze, Yae, and Hilde made up the fighter clique... Linze, Leen, and Sakura made up the mage clique... So that meant that Yumina, Lu, and Sue must have made up the royal clique... But then again, Hilde and Sakura were royals too.

We headed off to the storytelling event that Sakura and her family were hosting. Apparently, a group of street performers had joined in to entertain the kids with re-enactments of the stories. I also took care of a few troublemaking drunks.

The overlord was there, reading to the children with a... Frankly terrifying visage. Several of the children were crying. Sakura berated him for upsetting the kids... I had no idea why he thought putting on a creepy voice was a good idea.

I didn't want him to notice us and keep us held up, so we swiftly moved on back to the shogi hall.

We arrived to find all four monitors displaying the same image. It was the final match.

"Ohh... It's the king of Palouf, and he's up against Dolan!" A lot of the people in the audience were surprised.

It was the king of Palouf, Ernest Din Palouf. He'd registered under the fake name Ernie Palous.

Thanks to the badge he was wearing, the audience saw him as someone completely different, but he still had the appearance of a child to them.

The idea of a ten-year-old boy beating several adults and advancing to the finals? No wonder they were all so shocked.

“That kid really is a genius... Rachael is one thing, but together they’re incredible...” I looked through the crowd and saw Rachael watching his game. The Paloufean guards were there too.

Rachael had a tense look on her face, she was totally enthralled. Now and then she’d turn to Duke Rembrandt and ask for an explanation of what was going on. She seemed worried about the boy.

Meanwhile, the young king was focused entirely on the game. Whether that was because he knew she was watching or not remained unknown.

His opponent was Dolan, owner of the Silver Moon in Reflet, he was glaring down at the board with narrowed eyes. His expression was scary even on a good day. Scary enough to make a little kid run away crying.

His pieces were greyed out, meaning his time was almost up. He quickly extended his hand and moved a silver general diagonally to the right.

The boy furrowed his brow at the sudden motion. Dolan grinned as he flipped the hourglass over. The colors of the pieces returned to normal, and it was the boy’s turn.

“Who’ll win...?”

“Mm... It looks like Dolan’s winning.” I spoke my thoughts to Lu, but I wasn’t entirely certain of them. The tide of the battle could’ve been turned quite easily.

The audience quietly exchanged their opinions on the matchup as the time limit continued to tick downwards.

The two of them were exuding an aura so intense that even those who knew little about shogi couldn't help but be drawn in.

The colors of the pieces began to shift, signaling the approaching end of Ernest's turn.

He moved his hand, bringing his horse diagonal.

His pieces reverted back to their regular colors. He flipped the hourglass and stared Dolan down.

Dolan's expression turned downright grim. It seemed as if the young king was backing him into a corner... But I also wasn't sure.

Yeah, I really can't follow the match, I should hire a commentator next time.

Dolan moved his piece, but he was clearly stressed out by the move. The atmosphere was so tense that nobody in the audience raised their voices at all. Nobody cheered for either side... They simply watched the two locked in mortal, psychological combat.



"...I resign," Dolan sighed in defeat, causing the Paloufean audience members to cheer out in joy.

King Cloud of Lihnea quickly joined in on the clapping alongside Ernest's older sister.

Rachael burst into tears, leading her father to softly comfort her. She was probably extremely relieved that Ernest won... The pressure must've been too much. The boy himself slumped back in his chair with a drained expression on his face. He did everything he could, and now the mental fatigue was hitting him... He was just a kid, after all.

Dolan folded his arms, frowned, and closed his eyes.

It was a shame he was defeated, but he still got second place. He was extremely talented and probably learned a lot from the event.

“...The beginning of next year.”

“H-Hm?” Dolan opened his eyes and began murmuring towards the young king. The king suddenly leaned forwards and tried to fix his posture.

“We’ll hold a shogi tournament in my hometown at the beginning of next year. Wanna participate? Won’t be as flashy as it is here... But we can settle our score then...”

“A-Ah, yes! Of course! I will!” Dolan then extended his hand, which the young boy quickly grasped.

Dolan... You might not be aware of this but you just invited the king of an entire nation to Reflet.

Either way, it seemed the two of them had formed an unbreakable bond, one unaffected by age or social status. He’d probably need the badge for the Reflet tournament, too.

The war was now over. Now all I had to do was handle the award ceremony... I would be handing over a shield and medal to the winners, just like the baseball tourney.

The grand champion was Ernie Palous, who was secretly King Ernest Din Palouf. Second place went to Dolan from Reflet. And third place went to a guy whose name I already forgot. He was a commoner who just tried his darndest.

Each of them smiled with the medal around their necks. The king of Palouf’s medal was made of orichalcum. He gazed at it with stars in his eyes.

He was clearly happy. The medal was tangible proof that he won on his own merit, and hopefully, it'd be a source of confidence for the kid.

"Congratulations."

"A-Ah, thank you! I'll treasure this for the rest of my life..." He was almost on the verge of crying.

The award ceremony wrapped up and everyone started to leave the stage. Just then, Rachael ran up towards Ernest and almost bowled him over with a massive hug. That was amusing.

"You did it! You did it!! I knew you could, Ernie!"

"Hh... R-Rachael, y-you're... Squeezin..." The boy began to gasp for air as his face turned blue, Rachael continued to squeeze him in sheer joy. I couldn't tell if the scene was heartwarming or mortifying, but I was happy he had someone who cared for him that much.

The shogi tournament was over, which only left the fighting tournament. Then the festival would end with a closing ceremony.

The festival seemed to have gone without a hitch. Amazing, when you considered how quickly I'd slapped it all together.

And... Right on cue, as I was quietly cheering about how things had gone well... My smartphone began to vibrate.

It's Relisha... Why do I have a bad feeling all of a sudden?

I picked up the call.

"Oh, 'sup?"

"Grand Duke, it's Relisha. We've detected a large-scale Phrase emergence event. It's in the eastern territory of what used to be Yulong. They number up to a thousand, but we haven't detected any Upper Constructs." That was bad news... But it'd been a while since we'd heard anything from the Phrase.

“Are there any nearby population centers?”

“The closest town is Feihang, around fifty kilometers away... But nobody lives there, it was abandoned when Yulong collapsed. Those that do live there would only be outlaws.”

“When are they coming out?”

“Tonight, approximately five hours from now.” *Tsk... That’s annoying... So like 10 pm at night, huh...*

If it was five-hundred to a thousand of them, and there were no Upper Constructs, then thirty Frame Gears would do fine. Based on the battles so far, even with numbers of up to a thousand, the Intermediate Constructs only made up like ten or twenty percent of the forces at most.

If we rolled out a group including the girls and their Valkyries, the fight would be easy enough.

I finished up my conversation with Relisha before calling Rosetta and Monica. I told them to prepare for a small-scale deployment.

Come to think of it, this is the first night-time battle against the Phrase... Doesn’t the Storehouse have something we can use to help out...? I guess I’ll speak to Parshe about it...

Seemed like I had a long night ahead of me...

Chapter II: The End of the Festival

“Your Highness, we’ve deployed them all.”

“Roger that. Keep on alert until the warning signs show up.” I gave my orders to Commander Lain and looked up to the sky. There were stars everywhere, and not a single cloud in sight.

Linze and I were sitting on the shoulder of her inactive Helmwig, looking up to the sky. *Huh... Come to think of it, I don’t recognize any of these constellations at all.*

We were in the eastern plains of Yulong, barren land that stretched out wide before us.

I sent out a report about the current situation to every world leader, just in case. Given where the emergence was occurring, none of them objected to me sending out a few Frame Gears.

Yulong had been left to rot after the last Phrase invasion and the civil war after that.

Most of Yulong’s citizens began migrating outwards towards the borders of other countries and establishing small towns there in order to rebuild their lives.

The majority of them headed west to Hannock’s border, or south to Roadmare’s border. Very few actually headed north or east.

That was because Xenoahs to the north was ruled over by the Demonkin, and they didn’t typically entertain the requests of migrants or other nations. Plus, the northern areas of the continent actually had pretty harsh weather conditions, so it was hardly what I’d call hospitable. Demonkin had far sturdier bodies, so it didn’t matter as much to them.

But then again... There’s the Nokia Kingdom to the east, right? Why didn’t the Yulongese migrants head there?

I voiced that question to Linze, who responded with a simple enough answer.

“Yulong and Nokia didn’t have friendly international relations. Actually, Nokia is said to have been founded when a group of people seceded from Yulong and formed their own independent nation to the east.” There was a steep mountain range along the border of Yulong and Nokia, which acted as a natural barrier to defend the Nokian people from Yulong.

Back in the day, Yulong had made several attempts to reclaim the land, but each excursion ended in failure.

I could understand why the Yulongese people hadn’t headed that way to seek refuge, given that relationship. The Nokians would probably be suspicious of anyone that came in from Yulong, since they might want to sabotage the place and claim it or something.

Still, it seemed that Nokia was another closed-off nation like Xenoahs was... They were similar to Elfrau, a cold northern nation with more isolated borders.

“The wind is pretty cold out here. I wonder if Yulong’s in the middle of its winter.” The seasons here didn’t work the same as they did back on Earth. The spirits made the climate generally unstable, but some countries did have cyclical seasons. Brunhild and Eashen had a standard spring, summer, fall, winter progression. It seemed like Yulong did, too. Brunhild’s summer had just about ended, incidentally.

Linze shivered slightly as she took out a small canteen and poured a hot drink out of it. She then passed it over to me.

Prepared as ever, eh? That’s certainly one of your strong points, Linze...

“Linze, do you think you’ll be able to handle the flying Phrase this time?”

“Of course. I have my Phrasium Blade and my Phrasium Scattershot, so fighting shouldn’t be a problem. Also, it only takes about half a second to transform, now.” *Impressive. Guess Doc Babylon’s been working hard.*

She’d been so focused on the Reverse World that I’d thought she’d forgotten all about the Frame Gears.

“Come to think of it, Touya... Your personal Frame Gear isn’t finished yet, is it?”

“Well, the design part is done... But honestly, it’s not urgent or anything. I can handle stuff without a Frame Gear for now... Plus the Doc would rather focus on the Reverse World research right now.” Saving that kind of stuff for later seemed fine to me. It wasn’t like I didn’t want her to make it, but she was only one person... Even if that person was a genius. It was still better to be safe than sorry, though.

“Your personal Frame Gear... What was it called... Reginleif?”

“That’s right. It’s basically following the same naming scheme as the Valkyries, so that sounds fine by me.” I was originally planning on calling it Odin, but I thought giving it the name of the Norse All-father might have been a bit arrogant... So I settled on Reginleif.

Reginleif meant “daughter of the gods,” so I thought that was appropriate, given that someday I’d succeed the gods and become one.

I sipped on the coffee that Linze had poured out for me when my smartphone suddenly began to vibrate.

“Master, we’ve-a confirmed the signal. They’ll be-a coming-a in about five-a minute.” I was being called by Parshe, who was aboard the Gungnir.

She'd been put in charge of support and intel for this skirmish, but she was technically being advised and guided by Cesca.

It wasn't as if I could give full intelligence control to a moron like her, even if she did have some redeeming qualities... That being said, the pervy maid was hardly any better.

"Gotcha. Tell everyone to start firing up their Frame Gears."

"Si, si!" There was no moon up in the sky tonight. The only thing illuminating this battle was the pale starlight. The Valkyries had night vision, so Yumina and the others would be able to see fine. But the standard Chevaliers didn't have any functions like that...

That's why I went to the Storehouse and picked up some external equipment that the regular knights could use. It kind of looked like the Chevaliers were wearing visors, which was a little funny... But it did the job and gave them the necessary low-light vision.

I originally thought of casting **[Light Orb]** to illuminate the place, but that would've just made us easy targets in the night, so I scrapped that idea pretty fast.

Anyone outside of a Frame Gear would find it incredibly hard to see in the dark, but I could easily use my own divinity to grant amplified vision to myself. I was slowly becoming less human, that much wasn't in dispute.

Linze slowly headed towards Helmwig's cockpit, as the sound of mechanical whirring echoed out from various spots in the dark.

I hopped down from Helmwig and looked ahead into the dark, until finally, I started hearing a sound like splintering glass.

"They're here." Space itself began to divide as sparkling, shimmering beasts filed out of the very air. The Phrase were here.

Yep, just Lesser and Intermediate Constructs.

“Try to remain as a group, and don’t let a single one escape. Leave the airborne ones to Linze, Yumina, and Leen. Lu, you act as the situation demands, alright?”

“A-Alright!” Leen’s Grimgerde, Yumina’s Brunnhilde, and Lu’s Waltraute were all capable of long-range combat. Though in Lu’s case, she needed to swap out gear for it.

“Alright... Guess I’ll start off with a good old bout of Meteor Rain... Then I... C-Can...” Just as I thought about opening a portal in the sky, I noticed something weird going on.

The Phrase were moving irregularly. They weren’t charging at us, like usual.

They hunted people instinctively... I knew that they chased down heartbeats and sought to end them... That’s why they headed towards the nearest population centers they could find and targeted all the people there. In other words, they were meant to come right at us. We were the nearest gathering of people.

So why in the hell were they scattering in all four random directions? Some were coming towards us, but others were running in the complete opposite direction.

“The hell? Are there actually civilians in the area?!” I was worried about that. It reminded me of when the wrecked Frame Gear was stolen... Back when that organization had taken it to make their inferior replicas.

They’d used an artifact to make themselves invisible when they stole that Frame Gear, it was entirely possible that something similar was being employed here to hide people... But that wouldn’t mask their heartbeats.

I decided using Meteor Rain wasn’t a good option right now.

Still, we couldn’t afford to let the Phrase escape.

“Linze! Take out the ones that are fleeing! Yumina, take down the stragglers!”

“Got it!”

“Understood!” Helmwigge soared up into the sky after transforming.

I looked down and saw Phrase shattering to pieces as their cores were expertly sniped from afar.

Yumina’s Brunnhilde was located in the back, wielding a sniper rifle. She was expertly dispatching many Phrase mooks at once with precise shots.

It was definitely doing a fine job as a vanguard support unit.

“Still... They’re acting really weird. They don’t have a leader or anything, so I guess they’re just wandering around and dying... Almost makes me pity them.” As the melee continued on, I could see the crack in space start to close, signaling the end of this weird mess. *Alright, now I just gotta...*

“Master! Grosso problema! Big trouble! Another wave incoming!”

“What?!” Parshe, who was analyzing the battlefield from Gungnir, delivered some devastating news.

Right on cue, the opening in space began to spread apart.

A new batch of Phrase came crawling out in the same horrifying manner as usual.

“Wait... Hold on...” Size-wise, they were no different to standard Lesser Constructs... But something was different.

Their bodies were not transparent or crystal-like, as the other Phrase’s bodies had been. They were more of a muddy-gold... Shaped kind of oval-like. I wondered if they were some kind of mutated subspecies... Their forms also seemed to shimmer and distort in the air.

But that's when it hit me. When I realized what I was looking at. When I saw the light emanating from them.

No matter how you looked at it... They were emitting divinity.

They had an aura proving they were blessed by a god.

"Son of a bitch... What the hell has that thing created?!" These Phrase were clearly not normal... They were probably created by the wicked god, the one that had eaten the servile god some time ago. They were clad in divinity, but I didn't sense massive power in them. That being said, they were several degrees stronger than a standard Phrase. I could tell that much.

But that meant that the wicked god must have already emerged from its cocoon... I started to gather my thoughts, but had no time to complete them. The Divine Phrase were on the move. "Wait... What?!" They did something I didn't expect. Something nobody expected. They started attacking their own. They extended their crystalline limbs and pierced the cores of the Lesser Constructs around them... Then they plucked the cores out of the other Phrase's bodies.

For whatever reason, the Lesser Constructs did not break to pieces... They started to... Melt.

It looked like ice turning into water... But it was a bit more viscous than water. They melted into what seemed like a sticky syrup.

The Divine Phrase then began to slurp up the goop that was once their allies, until only the cores remained. They didn't seem to care much about the cores, which were tossed to the ground and shattered. I had no idea what was unfolding before my eyes.

They ate their own kind... Something about that shook me to the core.

I had just witnessed Phrase-on-Phrase cannibalism. And then it clicked in my head. The Phrase in the first wave weren't running because they sensed human heartbeats. They were running to escape. They might have even been running in fear if they could feel it. At the very least it was something instinctive that told them to move away. As I tried to gather my thoughts on the situation, the Divine Phrase continued to devour their own kind. They completely ignored the Frame Gears surrounding them.

The Phrase species attacked human beings in order to find the Sovereign Core. That was their instinctive mission, and it was all they did. But these Divine Phrase didn't seem to care about that at all.

Which meant they served a new cause and were probably devout apostles of the wicked god.

"Touya... What is this?"

"I don't know. But it doesn't mean our mission is over here. Yumina... Can you try to hit one of those things from here?"

"Uhm... Yes, I can. I'll do it."

"Take the shot." Yumina fired a sniper round at one of the Divine Phrase as it was slurping up one of its kin.

Its dirty-gold body completely tanked the shot, save for a tiny crack. My divinity-laden eyes caught the moment of impact clearly. Its exterior was monstrously hard.

The surface began to regenerate quickly, but Yumina wasn't done. A second shot, and then a third, began penetrating through the broken area. Yumina was shooting it faster than it could heal.

The Divine Phrase wasn't letting its core be exposed without a fight, it kept on forcing its own metallic material back into the impacted area, desperate to cover it up. But Yumina kept on shooting into the precise area she thought the core was located.

If we called the regular Phrase the “crystal creatures,” then calling these things “metal devils” would probably be more apt. The fourth bullet pierced it, and it began to change its behavior.

Its round body began to melt away, black fumes rising from its form. Gradually it turned into a goop that resembled mushy ice cream, and its busted core lay on the ground among the mess. Yumina’s bullets had really done a number on it...

Seems like damaging the core can stop the metal devils, at least. But I gotta say, melting instead of shattering is a hell of a lot creepier.

“That means they can be defeated, then... Alright, everyone! Approach them in groups! Sakura, handle the support.”

“Got it...” Sakura’s Rossweisse began blaring a song that acted as a passive support spell.

Oh... That song... If I remember right, a four-man rock band from England played this... They were from Liverpool, I think. My grandpa really liked their music... I guess I have more of their songs than anyone else’s...

“Still... Why that song of all things?” To be honest there was no point speculating. Sakura couldn’t understand the English lyrics, so she probably picked it based on melody and rhythm.

The Phrase began to slow down as the soundwaves washed over them. It seemed like this song had the effect of decreasing their speed.

“Brunhild knight order... Charge!”

“HOO-RAH!” Commander Lain led a charge in her Shining Count.

Elze and the other frontliners began contributing to the melee themselves until it was an all-out brawl.

“Take... This!! Pulverizer!” Elze’s pile bunker smashed into the side of a metal devil’s body, but it countered using its bladed limbs... She hadn’t managed to penetrate its core.

After three strikes, she finally managed to take it down, then she jumped back from its melting body.

“Eww... It looks gross.” I agreed with her on that front. These metal devils were both Phrase and not Phrase at the same time, and frankly, I hated it.

Still... If they were apostles of the wicked god, why were they consuming the Phrase? I thought the wicked godbeast that ate the servile god was under the control of Yula, that Dominant Construct. Something didn’t add up.

“I wonder if that means something’s going wrong on the Phrase’s side...” If they were having a bunch of in-fighting, then I wasn’t exactly going to complain... But it did make me feel a bit uneasy.

Still, the stronger metal devil subspecies is going to be a pain... I had no problem with fighting both groups at once.

“Master! It’s another-a fissure!”

“Huh?!” A third fissure suddenly opened up out of nowhere, and a lone creature jumped down from it.

It was a humanoid crystalline creature with a coarse body.

“Oh hell no...!” I was face to face with a Dominant Construct. One of the apex of Phrasium life, superior to even the Upper Constructs.

To make matters worse, I remembered who this asshole was. It was the one I fought back in Xenoahs... Gila, if I remembered right. Gila grinned wide as he shot me a fierce glare. His piercing red eyes almost looked right through me.

He was a true scumbag... From what I remembered of the Xenoahs incident at least. He was a war-loving monster. He reveled in slaughter and didn't care who he killed.

Gila glimmered softly in the starlight as he looked me down.

One of the metal devils reached out a bladed limb and tried to attack him. Gila simply showed a look of displeasure on his face as he caught the handrail-wide limb in his hand, and dug his claws hard into it.

The sound of straining metal rang out as Gila's fingers dug deep into the metal devil's limb... Then he began to tug at it, pulling the creature's body towards him... Then he swung it and threw it into the air.

The metal devil soared into the sky before crashing into a nearby woodland area. Gila's power was immense as ever...

Still, that confirmed my suspicions. A Lesser Construct would never fight against a Dominant like Gila... It meant they weren't allies. I was honestly a little relieved to find out the power-hungry bastard in front of me hadn't sided with the wicked god.

He looked in my direction and extended an arm, then stuck out his index and middle fingers. Slowly, light began to gather between his fingertips. *OH CRAP!* A whooshing sound bellowed out as Gila fired a laser beam right at me.

"[Reflection]!" I created a deflecting shield at an angle in front of me.

"Ghah!" The beam hit the barrier and launched off into the night sky. The very air around it seemed to reverberate.

It was a hell of a shot, but I knew not to back down. Gila clearly hadn't gotten serious. He'd fired a beam like that before, and it was stronger that time.

He probably just sent the attack as some twisted way of saying hello... He really liked to mess with people, so I decided to fight fire with fire.

I opened up **[Storage]** as I cast **[Power Rise]** on myself, and then took out a warhammer made out of Phrasium.

“[Teleport]!”

“Wh-?!” In the blink of an eye, I appeared next to Gila and swung the hammer like a baseball bat.

Just as I made impact, I invoked **[Gravity]** to massively amplify the weight of the hit.

Then I released the hammer, sending it smashing into the Dominant before me. Gila and the hammer both went flying into the air.

The Phrase hit the ground and began rolling several meters along the plains. It was satisfying to watch.

But then he simply stopped and stood up as if nothing had happened. I should’ve known it’d take more than that.

“Hey now, Tooya! Ain’t you rough-housin’ me a little hard there?!”

“I don’t need your nonsense today, Gila. You should’ve just stayed down.” I grinned right back at him before drawing my weapon, Brunhild, from **[Storage]**. I switched it to Gun Mode.

“Sounds like yer plenty busy in this world, huh. It’s the same on our side. I gotta rip that Yula bastard limb from limb, y’know? Honestly, I don’t think y’got him, but I gotta ask... Y’all ain’t harboring that guy, are ya?”

“What?” What does he mean by this? Yula...? He was hanging out with the NEET god before the stuff went down with the wicked godbeast... But what the hell did he do? Why would we be sheltering him?

“...What did you mean by that? Are you saying Yula came through to this world?”

“Y’all really don’t know, huh? Tsk... That’s a real goddamn pain. The hell is he, then...?” Gila furrowed his brow and growled at the ground. It seemed like he was trying to locate Yula. I didn’t understand if they were enemies or allies.

But if what Gila had said was true, and Yula had seriously come to this world, then things were gonna go from bad to worse.

Even if the recoil sent him back, he’d gradually become acclimatized to being here until he’d be able to maintain a permanent presence... And if that happened...

“...What happened to the wicked god’s cocoon, Gila? Did Yula do something? Those muddy-gold Phrase look similar to it.”

“Oh? Y’know about the Shining Egg? Tell me what’cha know about it, bastard! We don’t got any idea of what it is... It’s creepy as hell! Nobody can break it! It sucks in the footsoldiers that goes near it and turns ‘em into weird shit!” Gila looked pissed off as he spoke, but he looked pissed off most of the time anyway. I was relieved either way. It seemed like the cocoon was still on the other side... I was worried it had hatched, or that Yula might have brought it over with him.

From what I could gather it seemed like Yula had abandoned the other Dominant Constructs and left the cocoon behind... But something felt fishy. There’s no way he’d just abandon the wicked god for no reason... Something felt really wrong, and it was irritating me.

“Pssh... Well, I don’t give a shit what that freak’s been plannin’. All I gotta do is kill him, right?”

“Aren’t you guys both Dominant Constructs? I thought you were allies.”

“That’s pretty racist, kid. We don’t all gotta stick together. At the end of the day I, the great Gila, will designate anyone who gets in my way an enemy. That goes fer you too, twerp.” Gila grinned as his arm morphed into a spear, then he came lunging at me.

“**[Slip]!**”

“Ghaugh!” Gila’s glorious charge turned into him falling flat on his face. I tried to shoot him with a couple of Phrasium bullets while he was down, but he managed to avoid them.

He extended the tip of his spear-like arm and embedded it into a rock before using it to pull his body out of my spell’s effective range.

“Bastard! What’d I say about playin’ dirty?!”

He glared at me, but I was getting sick of his attitude. I was pretty pleased that not even he was safe from my slippery ways, though.

“How about I make you fall over forever, you crystal loser.”

“Tsk... Think again, bitch. I ain’t gonna fall fer that again.” As he spoke, his heels began morphing slightly, small fragments of crystal began to protrude from his feet. When the transformation was finished, he began to hover above the ground. *No fair, that’s cheating! But I guess since there are flying Phrase, it makes sense that a Dominant would be able to do that...*

“Can’t slip me now, you little bastard! Time to pay ya what yer owed!” Gila came charging towards me. It looked like he was running still, but he was clearly levitating.

I used Brunhild to fire off several rounds at him, but they did nothing. He tanked every shot and continued hurtling towards me at a breakneck pace.

“Gh... **[Accel]!**” Just as his spear arm was about to smash into my ribcage, I managed to jump out of the way.

But Gila saw my change in motion and kicked off the ground, changing his own direction to chase after me.

His posture changed as he prepared to get me with a shoulder tackle. Several small spines began growing out of the surface of his body, primed to stab me. *Oh crap! I can't dodge that!*

"[Shield]!" I managed to use a shielding spell to prevent those spines from hitting me, but it didn't stop the attack's momentum. My own shield slammed into me, sending me flying backward and rolling along the ground.

I looked up to try and get my bearings, and Gila was gone from where he was. He was now standing right above me, his spear arm transformed into a fist, and it was poised to come slamming into my face.

I dodged by jumping to the side, but an enormous shockwave from Gila's impact with the ground reverberated outwards. If that attack had hit me, it would've done some serious damage... He wasn't holding back this time.

"C'mon, punk! Y'just gonna bore me by dodgin' all the time?!" He grinned as if to goad me into attacking.

I couldn't use **[Teleport]** effectively since he was attacking me so often. I needed to have a clear eye on the target to even manage a good hit.

He could keep up with my **[Accel]** as well, which meant that another surprise attack was out of the question.

Plus his body was just too tough. The shots I'd fired earlier had clearly hit his face and chest, but had barely made a dent in him.

Given that he was a Phrase, it stood to reason that he'd have a core like the rest of them... But I had no idea where it was.

Standard Phrase were fully transparent, which made it easy to see where their cores were. But the Dominant Constructs weren't fully transparent, only the crystal outcroppings on their bodies were.

If they had organs like humans, then it stood to reason that their cores would be stand-ins for their brains or hearts. I really should've asked Ende's friend Lycee about more details when I had the chance.

"Guess I don't have much of a choice here..." I allowed divinity to freely flow through my body, releasing it from me in an explosive burst. I'd unleashed my Apotheosis.

"Oh? What's all this...?" Gila sneered uneasily at my transformation.

My hair color changed again, but it didn't grow any longer this time. It seemed like my control over the process had increased to some degree.

"What's a little change of color gonna do, huh?!" He sneered once more before charging towards me, fist clenched. Gila roared as his fist came crashing down towards me.

My left hand, now clad in divinity, caught his fist with little effort.

"Wh... What?!" I stared him down silently and began to pour more strength into my grasp. Slowly, I heard cracking sounds, and Gila's fist crumbled into tiny fragments.

"Kh... Wh-What?! You fucker!" Gila jumped backward and thrust out his non-broken hand towards me. All five of his fingers extended forwards with incredible speed, attempting to pierce me.

But I could read all his motions clearly. I used Brunhild's blade to sever all his fingers, they shattered to bits in an instant.

"Son of a... Just what the hell happened?!"

"Just a little trick of mine. I didn't want to use it, and now you've gone and made me do it." Though I was joking, I couldn't really afford to. The Apotheosis put an incredible strain on my body. I was

fine for the time being, but I knew that once I turned back into a mortal, I'd pass out and probably need to rest for a while.

I needed to win this fight. I had to take out Gila, the Phrase, and the metal devils.

"Don't get fulla yerself, bastard! Yer just a human in the end! But fine, you wanna get serious?! I'll show ya serious!" Gila scowled hard as his broken parts began to regenerate, but that was only the beginning...

The crystalline parts covering his body started to rapidly grow and expand. His head, chest, and stomach... All of his body became coated in Phrasium material. Everything except his eyes was coated in a thick lump of crystal.

His fingernails began to extend into menacing claws, and crystal spines protruded from his back. His head had a horn on it, and he'd even grown a tail.

He'd turned into some kind of crystal beast... He almost resembled a dragon-like beastman, but far more horrific.

I wondered if this was the true form of the Dominant Constructs.

"GRAUUUGH!" He swung his fist into the air, slashing his nails through the very atmosphere. The shockwave rippled towards me, but I managed to see and avoid it thanks to my divinity. Several Lesser Constructs behind me were unable to dodge, and the sheer air pressure sliced them to bits.

I shot several divinity-laden bullets in Gila's direction. He laughed and crossed his arms as if to tank them, but exclaimed in shock and horror as the bullets actually sank through his carapace.

"Impossible...! How could you penetrate my Crystal Armament?!"
Ha! So divinity does work, great. Just as I was thinking that, the

bullets were stopped in their tracks by Gila's rapid regeneration. They fell to the ground with a clatter.

Shooting or cutting at him, even with divinity, didn't mean much if he could recover. I needed to destroy his core if I wanted to win.

"You gotta be kiddin' me...! Don't mess with me, Tooya! I'll put you in the ground!!" He roared right at me. I couldn't make out his face behind the crystal armor, but he seemed furious. His entire body was shaking.

Wait... He's not just shaking, he's... convulsing? Light began to overflow from Gila's body, and I realized what was happening. *Oh crap... Is he charging one of those railgun blasts that the Upper Constructs can use?!* The light began to swirl around, causing any fighters nearby to stop in their tracks and stare.

"Crap... I gotta stop him!" I knew he was going to aim at me. Dodging would be easy... But the people behind me would die. There's no way they'd be able to dodge a blast like that.

Gila, uncaring, continued to charge up his blast.

Suddenly I noticed something... A round object was shining in Gila's throat. *Is that... Is that his core?!* The Upper Constructs had glowing cores right before they fired, too... So there was no mistaking it. That was what I had to crush to kill him. "That's right, ya rat bastard! Take the hit or mourn yer friends! Ahaha--guh?!" Just as Gila was about to release his energy, his entire body was rocked by a fierce impact.

A massive crystal bullet came in from the darkness, fragmenting against his dense body and causing him to stumble.

He was staggered for only one or two steps, but that didn't stop me from taking the chance.

I fired a divine bullet right against his throat. Just one shot. The starlit night echoed only the sounds of shattering glass.

“...Oh...?” Gila let out a gasp and clutched at his own neck. The hole made in his body by Brunhild’s bullet was gaping.

The crystal armor coating Gila’s body loosened and clattered to the ground. My own gun, struggling from the recoil, broke down at the same time.

“That... Im...possible...” Gila’s body slowly turned into pure crystal, as if the life was being sucked right out of him. And, after a short while, the lump of shining rock that was once the magnificent Gila, fell forwards and shattered into myriad pieces.

I cautiously looked at him, but there were no signs of regeneration. He was gone forever.

I turned my head towards the beautiful Valkyrie who had given me that golden opportunity.

Brunnhilde, the silver Frame Gear, lowering its sniper rifle and standing proud in the darkness. Yumina... Had really outdone herself. Hitting a target so small at a range like that? She saved all of us...



I let out a sigh as the divinity flowed from my body. In a mere matter of moments, fatigue and dizziness wracked my body. I had no strength to even stand.

I started crumpling to the floor when suddenly, someone appeared from nowhere as if to catch me.

“You did a good job, you know? We’re proud of you, little brother...”

“That was quite the fight, Touya. I’m really impressed.” My eyelids were heavy but I opened them up anyway. I saw two familiar girls supporting me.

“Late as ever... What terrible sisters...” Karen and Moroha. They’d probably come after sensing the metal devils and their divinity. Then they probably picked up the pace when they’d sensed my own.

“Now now, Touya my boy... I wished to see how far you had come with my own two eyes, so it was I who asked them not to interfere.” Yet another familiar face appeared before me. *Even you came...? Ah well... I guess you would... You are visiting... The other gods aren’t here, though...*

I didn’t know about Uncle Kousuke, but I had no doubt in my mind that Suika would be either blackout drunk or sleeping.

“Ah... It’s bad... World barrier... Gotta...”

“Now, now. Everything is fine. Once things are cleaned up here, I promise I will get everyone back home with my magic. Rest for now, my boy...”

“Oh... O-Okay... Then I’ll sleep... Thank you...” I was fatigued beyond measure and ultimately submitted to unconsciousness.



The festival was over by the time I came to.

I'd been sleeping for over a day... Thirty-six hours, to be more specific.

The fatigue brought on by my Apotheosis was far more intense than I'd expected, leading me to fall unconscious for quite some time.

Yumina and the other Valkyries, as well as the knight order mopped up the remaining Phrase after I passed out. Even Moroha chipped in.

The metal devils were definitely blessed by the wicked god. I was worried their divinity would make them unkillable, but thankfully they didn't have much coating their souls.

The gods weren't allowed to use their divinity, but my sister managed to dispatch the metal devils without any real issue.

After the battle, God Almighty used **[Gate]** to send everyone home to Brunhild. From there I was put straight to bed. Flora confirmed I was only fatigued, so they let me sleep it off... For a full day and a half...

As such, I slept through the end of the festivities. The knight king of Lestia and Jutaro ended up clashing with each other in the final round of the fighting tournament, and Yae's brother ended up winning just by a hair's breadth.

Lord Ieyahsu was in the audience, and he along with the Eashen delegation were reportedly delighted. All the former Eashen-dwelling immigrants who lived in Brunhild were also happy that Jutaro won. It only made sense that they'd be proud.

Since I was asleep, Kousaka hosted the awards ceremony in my stead. The winner was Jutaro, and second was the knight king. He'd been using "Rei Hard" as a fake name. The third-place winner was Sonia, which came as a small surprise to me.

There were also interesting battles like a father-son clash between Leon and Lyon, a fierce fight between old man Baba and the

beastking, and many other action-packed fights. It was a shame I completely missed all of them while napping.

Kousaka also officiated the closing ceremony, and apparently, the town was lively all through the night as the partying continued on until dawn.

The festival came to a close just like that, everyone was home before morning, and I opened my eyes just before noon.

The only people in my room were my nine fiancées and Paula the stuffed bear.

“Crap... Seriously?” I sat in my bed, sighing softly as they explained the situation to me.

There’s no way... There’s just no way I slept through all of that and left our guests alone...

The other world leaders had the situation explained to them and thus weren’t offended. In fact, the people that governed the nations bordering Yulong expressed their deepest gratitude. But I still missed a lot, and that sucked.

The world leaders and their parties were returned to their homes via several **[Gate]** spells called on by god himself.

They were initially confused as to how someone else was using my magic, but once the pope explained that he was my grandfather, that seemed to satisfy their curiosities.

“I’m a mess...”

“That’s not true! You were in a life-or-death fight! It’s only normal you collapsed!” Lu tried to reassure me, but it only made me feel even more impotent.

I took on the risks when I activated my Apotheosis, but I never expected this. I definitely caused trouble for a bunch of people...

Ugh... The timing for all this seriously sucks. Gila, you rat bastard...

“Don’t feel bad about it, Touya. The festival was great!” Elze definitely raised a fair point, but I still wanted to see it through myself.

“I wish to participate in the tournament next time, I do.”

“Me too. My brother probably wishes for a rematch with Yae’s brother, as well.” Yae and Hilde grinned to one another as they planned the next festival. It seemed like this was going to become an annual event... I made a mental note to prepare better for the next one.

“Wait, where did God-pa... Godpa... Grandpa go, anyway? Did he head home?”

“This morning, yes. He used his magic to head back.” Damnit... I didn’t get to thank you, old man... Well whatever, I’ll call him later.

I started rising from the bed since my body felt pretty normal, but everyone suddenly crowded around and pushed me down on my back.

“Your plans for today have been called off, understand? You are to have proper bedrest and relaxation. If you don’t rest, then the people around you will be concerned for you.” Leen was putting her foot down, and I didn’t have it in me to argue.

I sighed and leaned back into my bed, causing everyone to leave the room with smiles on their faces. Kohaku and Luli came forwards and stood by, it seemed they were going to be keeping an eye on me.

“Master, rest is important for your health.”

“Fine, whatever... But seriously, I’m not even sleepy at all. I feel good.” To be honest my body felt a little heavy due to inactivity. I wanted to stretch my legs a bit.

Using a teleportation spell would make it easy to escape, but I didn't want to get caught out.

"Where are Sango, Kokuyou, and Kougyoku, anyway?"

"Sango and Kokuyou are with lady Suika in a tavern, while Kougyoku is surveying the affairs of the castle town."

"A tavern, huh..." I grimaced a little at what Kohaku had said. I was worried about Sango and Kokuyou getting all amped up on booze. That being said, they did seem to enjoy hanging out with Suika... I had heard stories about snakes being able to drink a lot...

"Goodness gracious... That lot certainly likes to take it easy..."

"And you don't, kitty-cat? Were you not lazing around like a fat cat during the festival? Do you have any right to admonish anyone else for being too slovenly?"

"What'd you say?! Like you're one to talk! I know you've been sneaking snacks from Mistress Crea in the kitchen!"

"...I was just testing the food. I had to be sure it was appropriate for our master."

"Sounds like an excuse to me!" I sighed quietly as the two of them squabbled when two flaming feathers floated in through the window and landed on Luli and Kohaku's heads.

"Yeooooowch!" They both cried out in pain and tended to themselves as Kougyoku fluttered in through the window. She perched herself on a nearby desk.

"Our master is in need of rest, and yet you two argue? Be more aware of your surroundings, you fools."

"She started it!"

"And I'm finishing it." The two of them were about to argue again, but they were silenced by Kougyoku's glare. She was certainly scary.

Kougyoku was the most gentle and refined of my summons, but she could also be explosively frightening.

“Welcome back Kougyoku, how’s the town?”

“Quite fine. The people are tidying now that the festival is over. The stores were all cleaning up this morning, but they’ve returned to standard business operations now.”

That was good to hear. I was sure that the after-party would’ve left a bunch of garbage lying around... We needed to put measures in place for that starting with the next festival. Installing more garbage cans would probably be enough, but a large incinerator might help as well.

“The hotel guests are all beginning to leave as well. Within a few days, we should be back to our usual ways.” I was glad to hear the Silver Moon would be a little less hectic, Micah would have some space to breathe.

Lanz was probably still helping her, come to think of it... He’d done a lot to help her as a waiter during the festival, so I decided to give him a little pay bonus... Maybe enough money for him to buy something nice as a present for Micah.

“What about crime? Everything ok?”

“Those that were arrested were released after the festival was over. No major crimes were committed, it was mostly just rowdy drunkards.” In this world, drunkards often had weapons on them... It wasn’t uncommon to see someone die due to a drunken dispute. I was glad none of that had happened during the festival.

“Thanks for your hard work, guys. How about all three of you take the day off, my treat.”

“...So you can sneak out unsupervised?”

“Guh...”

I'd been figured out. Kougyoku's scrutinizing gaze was a little much for me to handle. It was pointless to struggle, I'd already been read like a book.

"We are your humble servants, master. If you wish to sneak out, we will have to comply with that wish. But even if we turn a blind eye to it... Are you prepared to deal with the consequences if one of your esteemed brides-to-be finds out?"

"Ghuhh..." I... I guess you have a point...

Yumina and the others had recently developed an innate skill that allowed them to pinpoint my general location... If I sneaked out, I was sure they'd just end up finding me.

"Guess I got no choice... I'll sleep."

"A wise choice, my liege." I'm basically under house arrest, geez... This sucks... I don't wanna sleep, damn it...

Instead of napping, I fired up my smartphone and browsed some online news from my old world. *Oh... that actor died? That's a shame... Oh, a snap election? I never even got the chance to vote...*

I decided to send out some apologetic texts to the guests, since I wasn't there for the last parts of the festival. I'd make proper phone calls or greetings to them later, but this would suffice for the time being.

I made a mental note to send letters through Gate Mirrors to apologize to people who didn't have smartphones.

That was kind of inconvenient... The better thing to do would be to induct more countries into the alliance, that way I could give everyone smartphones and coordinate a lot better.

I probably wasted a good chance... This festival had every world leader in the same place, we could've done talks... I later learned that the world leaders had gotten a good chance to talk to each other

during the after-party proceedings, so things might have gone just fine even without me.

The Demon Kingdom of Xenoahs formally declared its intentions to join the alliance, so there was that at least.

I had time to spare, so I opened up **[Storage]** and pulled out the books I'd bought in the Reverse World. These were actually duplicates I'd made in the workshop. I'd put the original copies in Babylon's library. The ones I had were translated from the language they spoke over there, too.

The first book I started reading through was called Redia's Guide to Magic.

It was a book on magic written by someone named Redia, evidently. The information in it was sparse compared to what was known in this world.

Apparently, in the Reverse World, only people born with special qualities were capable of using magic, and those people were very rare.

I wondered why there wasn't much magic in their world, but it was probably due to their reliance on technology. The Gollems probably started the decline to begin with.

Rather than honing one's natural skill to cast **[Fireball]**, it would be much easier to operate a Legacy Gollem that could cast it at the drop of a hat.

There was no training necessary, no fuss or difficulty.

That being said, Gollems were still terribly expensive. The good ones were also hard to obtain. Plus they had limited functionality. If a Gollem had the ability to set a fire, then that was the only ability it could actually trigger.

That was kind of the same as a mage who only had the Fire attribute, though.

I idly read the book and pondered to myself, when a call from Doctor Babylon came in. She'd been busy in the Research Lab for a while.

"Oh, 'sup?"

"Touya? I did it, Touya! I built the thing! Now you can freely travel to and from the other side!"

"You what?!" Wait, you seriously did it?! You built up a gate I can use in the Reverse World?! The Dimensional Disruptor installed in Babylon was a one-way trip, there was no way back. I had to bypass through the Divine Realm every time if I wanted to come back to this world.

In order to combat that we needed to build up another portal that could be installed on the other side, to allow free travel between worlds. And it seemed like she'd finally done it.

All I had to do was shove it into **[Storage]** and bring it over to the Reverse World, then find a safe place to install it over there.

"However, activating it still requires a horrifically immense amount of magic power... I don't think anyone would be able to pass through either side without you, Touya."

"To be honest, that's fine. It makes it less likely to be abused."

"I suppose that's true... I'd like to begin testing right away! Are you ready?"

"Ah... Sorry, but I can't. I'm sorta under house arrest..."

"Huh?" I explained the whole irritating situation to her as she grumbled along to my words. Finally, we agreed that we'd do the testing the following day.

It seemed like I had a busy day ahead of me.

Chapter III: The Bloodstained Market

"I call it the Dimensional Disruptor Mk. II! It's completely identical to the first, though." Doctor Babylon and I were in the Garden. She was pointing right at an uninstalled portal device right next to the one that was already installed.

It was a silver archway that vaguely resembled France's Arc de Triomphe. Just like the first edition that was installed, it had several small meters installed around it.

"These two objects are linked by chronomancy, space-time magic. They're fixed to each other no matter where the other one goes. Basically, they're connected. If you install the Mk. II on the other side, then we'll have an anchor to the Reverse World."

"Makes sense... So I just need to find a safe place over there, right?" The Dimensional Disruptor wouldn't activate unless it had vast quantities of magic poured into it, so I wasn't really worried about visitors from the other side coming in... But on the other hand, I didn't want it being in a dangerous place where it could get trashed.

I thought putting it in the middle of nowhere and erecting a protective barrier would probably be the safest approach.

It'd be even better if I could get my hands on a Golem over there. I could task it with protecting the portal.

"Then that means... We'll be able to visit as well?" Linze spoke up quietly, causing Doctor Babylon to shift her eyes a little.

"Well... Mostly, I guess? It still needs some adjustments, honestly... If someone wants to go with Touya, there are limitations in place right now."

"Do you mean the number of people that can go, do you?" Yae tilted her head. *Crap, I can only take a certain amount of people? But I wanna take everyone!*

“There’s no limit to the number of people... The limit is actually weight-based. People other than Touya need to weigh no more than 48kg each. Probably 45kg just to be safe...” Doctor Babylon’s words caused the girls to freeze in place. *Yikes... That’s uh... Weight’s a sensitive topic...*

I’d made a changing room in the castle with an accurate scale, so everyone should have had a vague idea of how much they weighed.

I didn’t really want to pry, but I had no doubts that Sue and Doctor Babylon would be lower than 45kg. Leen, Yumina, and Lu were probably petite enough to meet the standards as well.

Sakura was expressionless as ever, but Linze, Yae, Elze, and Hilde were all looking around in a small panic.

The girls were around fifteen to sixteen years old... It would be weird for them to weigh over 50kg, wouldn’t it? I realized I didn’t actually know. I had no standard to compare.

It seemed that even in this world, girls were conscious of their bodies. Men didn’t really seem to care so much in general, I noticed.

“Come to think of it, I need to locate the safe space on the other side first, right? You guys shouldn’t all come with me right away... Something bad might happen, and you don’t want to be stranded over there!” I smiled over at the girls to try and give them a little way out, and suddenly the girls all started speaking at once.

“Y-Yes, Touya-dono! You are right, you are! We cannot say that the world over there is safe, we cannot!”

“Yae’s right! We can’t make assumptions!”

“Yeah! It’s not like we’re in any rush! That world ain’t going anywhere!”

“Y-Yes, I don’t mind waiting a little longer for our group trip...” I could tell what they were really thinking, but I decided to let it go. There were some matters that a man had no business intruding on.

Yumina and the smaller girls raised no real objections. They probably couldn’t argue with the fact that it was a bit soon to bring them anyway. Sue got a little grumbly, but she soon settled down.

“That makes safe sense to me, really. I’ll make some fine adjustments while we wait for a better setup on the other side.” Doctor Babylon nodded in agreement. *You should’ve just said that from the start!*

I shrugged my shoulders and shoved the Dimensional Disruptor Mk. II into my **[Storage]**. Then I started channeling magic into the active portal. Even though I’d completely filled it last time, just one trip drained the reserves entirely.

We needed to improve the energy conservation features on the portals as well... It was true that it meant I was the only one who could really use it, but I wondered if that was actually safe enough. The meters filled up on the arch as the inside of the structure began to shimmer. The image of a wide-open plain fell into clear view.

The Mk. II was in my **[Storage]**, so it had just connected to some random location in the Reverse World again.

That was fine, though. I could easily use **[Gate]** to warp to Allent, that capital city I’d visited.

Last time Kokuyou, Kougyoku, and Sango came with me, so I decided to take Kohaku and Luli with me this time.

“Are you fine taking those two with you, Master?”

“I do hope they don’t squabble...”

“I certainly worry...”

“We won’t fight!!”

“Enough, let’s go.” Kohaku and Luli were grumbling at the other Heavenly Beasts, but they reassured them it’d be fine. I didn’t have time to deal with the fuss, so we just headed off.

“Alright, I’m off. I’ll be back either tomorrow or the day after.” Time dilation often happened during the teleportation process, so it’d probably take at least a day to find a safe spot. I was sure it’d be fine.

“Don’t do anything insane like you usually do, Touya...” I felt like Yumina had stabbed me right through the heart with her words. It wasn’t as if I meant to do all those crazy things... They just happened to end up that way.

“It is not just the fault of Touya-dono’s surroundings, it is not.”

“He always takes spur-of-the-moment actions.”

“Don’t go poking your head into any unnecessary trouble, alright?”

“A-Alright. I’m off!” Yae, Hilde, and Elze all performed follow-up attacks to Yumina’s words, so I escaped by jumping through the portal.

The weird sensation of passing through a rubbery membrane overcame me again, but the plains I’d seen through the arch finally came into proper view.

I saw a rocky cliff face not far ahead, and the area behind me seemed dusty and dry. The place kind of resembled the American wild west. I wondered if horse-mounted gunslingers would appear...

“So this is the Reverse World...”

“Interesting seeing it with my own two eyes.” The two of them looked around with curious gazes. It wasn’t like the whole world looked like this... I’d been to cooler places.

“Alright let’s see... Wow, I’m a ways off from Allent.” I looked up my location on the map and I was far to the south-east of the Reverse World... The adjacent location to where I was in the regular world

would be around Sandora. Allent was approximately located in Roadmare's territory if we were mapping equivalents.

Not like it mattered, I could easily open up a **[Gate]** and warp over to civilization.

"Hmm... Now then... I could always just install the portal here... There's not a soul around." I could only see vast, dry plains. There was no trace of human life in this place. It kind of seemed like a place that no human would ever visit. It was basically a perfect spot.

"My liege, this place isn't necessarily safe. There may be wandering beasts around..."

"Good point..." Kohaku was right. I remembered that two-headed monster I'd encountered when I first came to the Reverse World, there could easily be similar creatures.

I could always set up an invisible barrier by casting **[Shield]**, or disguise the portal as a rock or something by using **[Mirage]**, but it was better to be safe than sorry.

Having a piece of land or a house would be the best bet. That way I could safely install the portal in the basement or something.

Having someone mind the house would be useful, but probably not practical.

I could always call a summoned beast to act as a guard... But it'd vanish the moment I went home. That was unideal, too... I should've asked Doc Babylon to make another magic storage tank...

"It might just be in my best interests to get a Golem after all..." Thus I decided my next course of action. Sancho told me that anyone in this world could get a Golem, so long as they had the absurd amount of money required to buy one.

I'd seen Golems acting as bouncers or bodyguards in town. I could maybe pick up a cheap one and upgrade it or enchant it so it'd be stronger...

"Guess I need to earn some money, then." I didn't have any money to my name in this world. I'd sold some gold ingots to Sancho, but I ended up betting all of those earnings away at a casino...

Wait... I helped the Red Cats with that orichalcum and adamantite... They still owe me!

The last time I'd seen them, I'd helped them escape from the knights attacking their hideout. I had no money right now, so I knew what to do. I just had to collect what I was owed!

"Uhm... Let's see here... Search... Red Cat..." I searched for Nia, their leader. She was currently in a place the map referred to as the Kingdom of Streign. Specifically, a town named Carne.

She wasn't directly in the town, though. They called themselves chivalrous, but they were still a band of thieves. It was only natural they'd want to keep things on the down-low.

I checked the location further and found they were in a forest. The marker on the map showed that there was a stone-built structure there... It was called the Douze Fort Remnants... So they were probably using that place as their current forward base. My map app wasn't sophisticated enough to show me more than basic info.

I searched for other members of their group, but there weren't even thirty there. That seemed like too few, so I wondered if they were on a mission.

Well... Nia's gonna be able to help me, I'm sure. I guess I know where to go.

I couldn't use **[Gate]** since I'd never been before, and **[Teleport]** was an unstable choice since the place was too far away to get an accurate destination in mind. If I used it without proper care, I could

end up in the middle of someone's house, or a lake. Luckily the spell didn't let you phase into existing solid matter... That was a small relief.

[Teleport] really wasn't suitable for long-distance travel.

But I rationalized that it was a forest location, so I probably had room for some margin of error. I checked the map once more, and none of the Red Cats were in the forest other than the ones at the fort. It wouldn't have been a problem even if they saw me, though. They should've been informed of my abilities. Thus I decided teleporting was the best idea.

Let's see...

It's in that direction... So... Let's do this...

“[Teleport].” Immediately the desolate plains around me became a lush forest. My feet were about ten centimeters above ground, so I briefly stumbled... But I managed to catch myself.

“Wow... So I really could cover that amount of distance in one go...” I looked at the map and found the fort was still a few kilometers away.

It went well, but not as well as I'd hoped. It was kind of like throwing balled up trash into a garbage bin. If you were used to it and practiced, you could probably hit the target just right. But you needed to practice.

Still, that wasn't a big deal. The fort was close enough that another teleportation burst would bring me into it.

I didn't want to alarm them, so I decided teleporting right in front of Nia was probably the smartest move to make. I opened up the map and checked on Nia's location. She was alone, in a place that looked like a courtyard on the map, that was ideal.

I shrugged my shoulders and cast my spell once again.

I didn't realize the horrible mistake I had made. I should have thought about it more deeply. I should have reconsidered. But I didn't. And now I can tell you what happened.

"Huh?" She wasn't in a courtyard. She was in a small room. It wasn't really a room, it was more like a green, circular tent.

Before my eyes was Nia, leader of the Red Cats.

".....Ah." Her eyes were wide in shock as she glared down at me. Her red hair, usually up in pigtails, flowed freely down.

Her hands were in the middle of lifting up her shirt, but were now frozen in place. Her pants were at her feet. Her lower body was only covered by some tiny red underwear...

I'd teleported in on her changing her clothing.



“...Why you...!”

“Ah, no, wait... Please understand. This was an accident!” I felt an impending sense of dread ripple through the air as her cheeks became just as red as her underwear.

This tent had clearly been erected in the middle of the courtyard. She’d clearly stepped into it to get changed. My map was too limited to show temporary structures like that.

I looked up at Nia, who was now clenching her fist and glaring at me with an awkward half-smirk on her face.

“Any last words, punk...?!”

“Well...”

“Well?”

“Red’s a little mature...” The moment I dared to speak, Nia’s right hook got me clean in the jaw. I could’ve dodged it, but I had to man up and take it. I deserved it. Her punch was hard enough to rattle my brain around in my head. I collapsed right on the spot.



“...I see. So that’s how it is. You really should’ve just walked here normally...!”

“I’m sorry, really...” I was bowing down in the tent, apologizing to Nia.

“My liege, don’t worry about it.” Kohaku tried to reassure me about it, but her way of doing so was a little... Simplistic.

Still... They did look nice... But I couldn’t find myself sinking into the pitfall that was that line of logic.

“It’s probably a good thing you accidentally stumbled on Lady Nia, rather than Est. She would not have let you off with a mere punch.”

“Est certainly shows no mercy... She works people hard and doesn’t so much as care a bit about it.” Euri, a member of the Red Cats with soft and wavy hair, spoke in a calm and casual manner. Nia nodded along with her.

It seemed like their second-in-command, Est, was absent. The ponytailed girl, Euni, wasn’t present either. They were currently in Allen, the capital of the Allent Theocracy. I wondered what they were investigating... Still, it was clear that I had been saved from a grim fate.

“That doesn’t mean I’ll just forgive you, though!” Nia grinned sadistically in my general direction.

I had a bad feeling about that expression of hers.

“...What do you want from me?”

“What I demanded when we last met. Teach me magic. Something simple is just fine!”

“Ooh! Teach me, too!”

Oh come on... Is this seriously happening? Magic is known about in this world, right? It can’t be that hard to find a teacher. Hell, I was reading a book about magic earlier! How come I’ve gotta be the one to do it?

Bah... Fine, I guess I can teach her something basic.

“...Fine, then. But you gotta promise not to abuse the power.”

“Abuse?! When would I ever?”

“Just remember that a good person won’t use magic in a way that’ll bring regret down the line.” I thought it was probably futile talking about ethical magic use to the leader of a band of merry thieves, so I just opened up [Storage] and took out a couple of spellstones.

I placed them on a table in the middle of the tent, next to a dimly lit lantern.

“Ohh... What are these pretty little rocks?”

Mm... I had a feeling spellstones didn't exist here. Come to think of it, that could be why magic didn't develop as much in this world. They're kind of necessary to determine aptitude and stuff.

This world did have something they called Leylight stones, which could've possibly been some kind of equivalent to light-type spellstones. It was entirely possible that there were other elemental stone equivalents I just hadn't come across.

“These are spellstone fragments. We can use them to determine the types of magic you have an affinity for. But don't be surprised if it comes up with no results. There are a lot of people who can't use magic, after all.”

This world especially had a low amount of magic users, and I had a theory that even the mages in this world didn't have much magical power in them, either. If you think about it in the analogy of a faucet, water won't flow out unless you turn the handle. Perhaps the tap was never turned due to the handle being too stiff.

Then, after several generations of being unturned, the handle would begin to rust. However, that meant the potential for water flow would still be there. It would just be even harder for later generations to turn the rusted handle and activate the faucet.

From what I'd heard, there were magic schools in the Reverse World, but they weren't exactly common institutions. Unlike the world I'd traveled from, the world with Yumina and the others, magic wasn't considered anything particularly important here. That was probably thanks to the fundamental reliance on Golems that this society had.

Honestly, Nia becoming so fascinated by magic was a rare instance, too.

That was probably because she'd gotten interested in all the weird stuff I could do with my own powers.

"So, what should I do?"

"You just need to chant an incantation while holding the spellstone. If the stone reacts, then it means you have an affinity for the magic type related to the stone you're holding."

I wanted to show her an example, but I remembered what happened back with Linze at the Silver Moon when I was testing my own aptitude and thought better of it...

My magic power was a teensy tiny bit too immense for practical examples in a casual setting.

I told them the incantations they needed to know, and the results were in. Nia had an aptitude for Fire, and Euri had an aptitude for Light.

Wow, I'm surprised... Didn't expect them both to have an affinity. To be honest, though, I wish they'd both just turned up without any aptitude at all so I could forget about this... I better not tell them that, though.

"Do you know about how to direct magic flow?"

"I do, yes. You need to use the flow of magic power to manipulate a Golem. Actually, that reminds me, Rouge is late today... Where did he go, I wonder."

Rouge was the name of Nia's Golem, if I recalled correctly. I'd never actually seen it myself. I hadn't considered that it'd be an autonomous unit, I wondered what it was off doing by itself.

Seemed like that orichalcum I gave them for repairs was more important than I'd thought.

Still, I had to focus on magic lessons. I was glad they already knew how magical flow worked, since explaining that was the hardest part... According to Linze and Leen, at least.

Even when Sakura studied magic, it had taken her a while to grasp the basics of magical flow.

“Alright, so... You need to gather the magic power in your body, visualize what you want to happen in your mind, and then chant the incantation.” Imagining the result made it easier for the spell to be cast.

“**Come forth, Light! Tiny Illumination: [Light Sphere].**” A small orb of light appeared out of my fingertips.

“Oooh! Amazing! It’s all shiny!”

“Woow... It’s so pretty...” I made it float around the tent and then snapped my fingers, ending the spell.

“Can I do that spell, too?!”

“You can’t, no.”

“Whaaat, how come?!”

“Remember what I said. There’s a reason we checked your aptitude. That spell just now was a light-element spell. You only have an affinity for the fire element, Nia. So you can only use Fire spells.” Nia sulked a little, then Euri raised her hand.

“Does that mean I can...?”

“It does, yes. Gather your magic power and imagine a little ball of light, just like the one I made. Say the same incantation I did, and you should be able to cast it.”

“Uhm... **Come forth, Light! Tiny Illumination: [Light Sphere]!** Aaah!” A teeny tiny ball of light, around the size of a small coin, appeared at her fingertip.

She was so surprised by its appearance that her concentration lapsed, and it vanished. But she'd still succeeded. It was a basic type of magic and wasn't really hard at all, but a win was a win.

I was glad to see that this world had people in it who were capable of picking up magic at a decent pace.

"It vanished..."

"That's because you lost your concentration. When you get used to it, you'll be able to cast the spell even without concentrating. That being said, you could use it to generate a blinding blast if you create an intense light and then immediately turn it off." I was talking like a wise and knowledgeable teacher, but really I was just regurgitating what Linze had told me. If employed creatively, even basic spells could become invaluable tools.

"Wow... I was able to use some magic, that's so amazing!"

"No failir! Let me do it! Hey, teach me some fire stuff!" Nia started to grumble, so we stepped outside the tent. We couldn't exactly have her setting off fires while we were surrounded by cloth.

We couldn't have her setting off fires in the nearby forest, either...

And a lot of the stone walls in this old fort were overgrown with dry ivy and other plants. In the end, we settled for a relatively safe-looking corner of the courtyard.

"Come forth, Fire! Hail of Red Stones: [Ignis Fire]." A small bundle of fire dispersed from my fingertips. The flames hit a collapsed beam near a stone wall and wrapped it in flames. I'd held back a bit, so the heat wasn't enough to melt stone. Some of the moss ended up burning up, but the flame burned itself out after a small while.

"Whoa! That was a fire alright!"

"It's not enough to kill, but it's a valuable tool in itself. It's the most basic Fire spell there is."

Nia seemed excited to hear my explanation. She faced the same stone wall I'd faced and chanted the incantation herself.

“Come forth, Fire! Hail of Red Stones: [Ignis Fire]!” Nia's chant caused a small ball of fire to come out from her fingertips, blasting at the wall much like mine did. Hers seemed to pack quite the punch, destroying a tiny bit of the wall's face on impact. I was surprised to see that kind of power from a novice.

“I did it! Yahoo!” Nia began to cheer as multiple bundles of fire-like shots volleyed from her fingers. Seemed like she had quite the reserve of magic power. And then I realized what I should've been paying attention to the whole time. *Wait a goddamn second. How's she casting the spell again so quickly without chanting?! I-I mean, it's possible to do that, but that's an advanced technique! You can't just keep doing it right off the bat, what the hell?!*

Nia only had an aptitude for one element, and it was true she knew how to flow magic already thanks to her Golem... But to cast like this required an extremely experienced degree of magical control. Her skill was honestly unreal.

“Touya! Do you know any other spells?”

“Hm?” There were plenty, but Fire magic was mostly made up of offensive spells. Something small like **[Ignis Fire]** was fine to show her, but I didn't want the entire forest going up in smoke. Still, maybe I could teach her something else...

“Rise thus, Fire! Flaming Defenses: [Fire Wall].”

“Wow! It's a wall of fire!!” I showed her a more defensively-oriented Fire spell, but that spell was definitely more advanced, so I knew she wouldn't be able to use it herself. **“Rise thus, Fire! Flaming Defenses: [Fire Wall]!”**

SHE CAN USE IT?! Nia effortlessly repeated the spell I had just cast. *Okay, no way... This is seriously a little much.*

I was beginning to feel how Linze must have felt when I was first starting to learn magic from her. In my case, it was because of god's blessing... Well, more because I'm incredibly overpowered, but what about Nia's? I wondered if maybe every human in the Reverse World actually had incredible magic potential. To test that theory I had Euri try a more advanced Light spell, but she couldn't muster it at all. She had a good aptitude for magic, and she'd be able to do it after a bit of practice... But she couldn't hold a candle to Nia.

I decided against showing her stronger magic spells for that session at least. If she could cast something like **[Mega Explosion]** there's no telling what kind of horrors she could unleash.

I decided it might be wise to talk to Est about how to proceed here.

"Say, Touya... Why'd you come here, anyway?" Euri turned to me and asked a fairly simple question. *Oh, now you ask me?* "I wanted to get myself a Gollem, but I don't have any money. I came by to get the payment for the orichalcum and other stuff I sold you guys last time."

"Aaaagh! I completely forgot about that!"

What.

I didn't expect her to try and skirt on paying me, but saying she forgot already was a little much...

"It's true we haven't paid you yet, but we can pay! Euri, fetch Touya's money from the safe."

"Yes'm!" Euri saluted and marched into the fort. ...*You forgot about paying me, but you still had the money prepared and locked in a safe? Well, whatever... I guess that whole deal was a while ago.*

Euri returned with a small sack in her hands, which she promptly dropped into my palm. It certainly felt heavy, and I could hear the coins rattling around inside.

“Uhhm... That should be about... A hundred and fifty royals? That’s totally gotta be enough... It took a lot to get that much!” I wasn’t sure about the exchange rate, but I learned the money I held in my hands was roughly one and a half billion yen.

I couldn’t believe a band of thieves would have this level of money on them... Or maybe they had this much precisely because they were thieves.

“Can I get a Gollem with this, then?”

“You can buy a factory model, sure. I don’t know if you’d be able to get a legacy, though... They’re pretty special.”

“It’s pretty rare to even see a legacy model on the open market.” That was interesting. I’d have personally preferred a legacy model, but a factory model would also end up sufficing for my purposes. After all, I planned on having Doctor Babylon inspect and upgrade whatever Gollem I ended up getting.

“Then again... We could find you a legacy model... If we go there, I mean.”

“Ah... That’s right. We could definitely find one there...”

“Where?” I looked at the nodding duo in front of me in confusion, and Euri opened her mouth to explain.

“Legacy Golems are discovered by adventurers that delve into ruins, for the most part. There are places where they’re sold without going through the proper legal channels... There’s also a place where you can buy Legacy Golems you wouldn’t ordinarily find for sale... Maybe because these Golems were stolen from somewhere else, or maybe because they’re unusual and just not wanted anymore...”

“There’s a place like that? Would I seriously be able to get a Legacy Gollem there?”

"I think so, yes. We'll be able to take you there, okay? It's... A dangerous place, to be sure. But I'm sure that's no problem for you, Touya." *Dangerous? That certainly sounds foreboding...* Before I could ask for more details, Nia grinned and opened her mouth.

"We're off to the black market."

"The black what now?" *That's certainly an ominous name... It certainly conjures up a clear enough image of what kind of place it is... But I wonder if we'll be able to go there without any trouble.* "It's a great place for underhanded dealings. You can buy anything and everything there. There's far more than just Golems for sale there."

"That sounds dangerous... Is it connected to some kind of underground organization?"

"That's correct, yes. The black market is operated by an underground organization called the Black Papillon. They're different to us, there's nothing they won't do for money. Someday my goal is to use the Red Cats to bring them down... Wait, you could help me defeat them, Touya!" Nia started to concoct a plan without any of my consent at all.

"Hold it, don't get any funny ideas. Don't drag a kind and upstanding man like me into your plans."

"The type of kind and upstanding man who peeks on a girl when she's changing?"

Ugh... That's completely irrelevant here...

"Well, let's put that aside for now... If you want a legacy model, then we're going to have to go down to the black market. Ruins don't always yield them, after all." Exploring ruins was certainly an option... But I decided to just go along with this idea for now.

Plus, I was somewhat intrigued by what I'd been told about this place. It was possible I could get my hands on something weird.

“The market isn’t dangerous if you’re there to buy, but there’s one golden rule you must follow... Never ask about where something came from. If you follow that rule you’ll most likely be safe.” Euri explained a little more. That made sense, if the place dealt in stolen goods. It’d be suspicious to start asking questions about the wares. In the worst case scenario, the Black Papillon might end up targeting whoever was asking around.

“What are we doing, my liege?”

Hrm... Well, as the saying goes... Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

“Alright. Take me there. But let me just be clear, I’m not going to help you fight this organization, alright?”

“Tsk... Ah well... That’s fine. I’ll use the chance to snoop on the enemy for a little bit. Now we just need to wait for Rouge... Oh wait, there it is.” Nia’s gaze turned toward one of the fort’s side entrances. I saw something small walking in from the forest.

Its body was red, a dark and burning crimson. It almost looked like a knight in full armor, but it was also incredibly tiny. It had spikes jutting up from its head. Despite its size, it was lugging along a massive wild boar, one about the same size as a car.

It clearly had an incredible amount of strength... It dropped the boar down in front of us with a heavy thud.

“Welcome back. How far did you go?”

“Northward. Deep in the forest. Met unexpected danger.”

“It talks...?” The voice was somewhat mechanical, but the red Golem had clearly spoken. I remember that the wolf Golem alongside Elluka had also spoken, but a bit more eloquently. It was about as conversational as any of the Babylon sisters were.

“Rouge, this is Touya. He’s the one that gave us the items we used to repair you. And Touya, this is Rouge. It’s my partner. Technically, its full name is Blood Rouge, but Rouge is easier to say casually.”

“I have heard of you. Gratitude is extended.”

“Ahh... Don’t worry about it, really.” The Gollem bowed its head. It felt like its appearance and its manner of speaking clashed a little... But honestly, it felt pretty human in its motions. Est’s Gollem, Akagane... That one definitely felt a lot more robotic than this one.

If I recalled correctly, Rouge was part of a special Gollem sub-type called the crown series. Apparently, the crowns were legendary legacy models with exceptional skill. They were supposed to outclass all the other Gollems in the world... But frankly, I hadn’t seen too much to be impressed by from this little guy.

“Rouge, we’re headed to the black market. Wanna come?”

“I shall accompany you. Master.” Rouge nodded softly toward Nia. They kind of resembled an older sister and little brother more than a master and robotic servant. Then again, Rouge was clearly far older than Nia was.

“So, where is it?” I whipped out my smartphone and used it to project a world map.

“Here’s the fort we’re in right now... Currently, the black market is in the city of Goldose, which is to the south... Right here. Goldose is a casino city, come to think of it.”

“W-Wait a second... Is it a big, gaudy city that shines out into the night?”

“Yes, are you familiar with it?” *That city of all places... The place where I went and gambled like crazy that one time... Weird that I didn’t catch its name until now.*

Then again, I did lose all my money there... I was probably more focused on that.

“So wait, is that city controlled by the Black Papillon?”

“No, the black market venue changes every month. This time it just happens to be in Goldose, but that doesn’t mean Black Papillon has anything to do with that city. Though it does mean someone in the city’s higher-ups has accommodated them.” They probably circulated their location to prevent being caught out by the government. Nia certainly knew a lot about them.

“Only a thief can catch out a thief. We have our own methods of catching information, you know.” Euri grinned as she brought a finger up to her lips. The Red Cats were certainly a group of chivalrous thieves, but they still employed underhanded means. They could then use any information gained via such dark channels to their advantage.

I kind of felt like they shouldn’t have been telling an outsider like me such sensitive info, but it’s not like I was going to do anything with what they’d told me.

“We can travel to Goldose without a problem... But are you guys fine to come with?” Nia was the leader of the Red Cats, so I had some reservations about taking her out into the open. She responded by waving a dismissive hand and grinning.

“Very few people know I’m the leader of the Red Cats, you know. Plus, Rouge will be with me... It’ll keep me safe from harm.” It seemed like even though the Red Cats were infamous, their leader’s identity wasn’t widely known. I’d planned on using **[Mirage]** to disguise us if it came to it, but that didn’t appear to be necessary anymore.

We informed the other Red Cats in the fort where we’d be headed and left behind a small mouse that I’d summoned for them.

They'd be able to communicate to the mouse if anything suddenly came up, and the mouse would convey the message to Kohaku and I.

Nia excitedly watched the summoning and immediately begged me to teach her how to do it. She looked crestfallen when I informed her that it was Dark magic, and she didn't have any kind of talent for that school.

We walked together to the outer district of Goldose, which wasn't too far from the forest. Even a city as gaudy as this had a dark side to it. This city's underbelly was, of course, the slums... A place where the destitute wandered around, the last stop for those with no more dreams.

Once we made it there, we headed into a back alley and used **[Gate]**, then used it to enter the main street of the city itself.

The neon lights weren't blaring since it was daytime, but the city still looked just as flashy.

We headed up toward the central district and paid a toll at a gaudy gate to enter.

It kind of felt like paying an admission fee to enter an amusement park...

"So, whereabouts is it?" There were several dome-shaped casinos in the central district, owned by different people. I imagined that at night, this place was like a battlefield, with each competing to attract more customers and revenue.

There were also regular buildings surrounded by emptier land here and there... The casinos weren't open during the day time, and I was mostly curious about where the market was. "We're heading to Goldman's Casino... Or rather, where the casino used to be."

"Used to be?"

“A few months back, the owner of the casino was arrested for a lot of illegal deeds, including running a gambling ring based on combat. He was having slaves fight Gollems to the death, and profiting from it. We’d intended to defeat them ourselves, but we were beaten to it...” Nia started to pout a little and kick at the ground. I wondered what was up with her when Euri chimed in.

“The owner of the casino ended up being defeated by the owner of a black crown, much like the boss. She’s in a bad mood because one of her rivals took all the glory before she could.”

“Don’t say that!” Nia grumbled and flicked Euri on the forehead. The assaulted girl flinched and brought her hand up to the point of impact, tears welling up in her eyes. It certainly made a nice painful noise there.

A red crown and a black crown? Could the crown series be color-coordinated or something? “Regardless, the new owner of the casino dome is working with Black Papillon and letting them host the market there.” That made sense. I opened my map and looked at the city’s layout. Thankfully the name of the casino hadn’t been formally changed yet, so I was able to locate it with little difficulty.

We walked over to the dome and found ourselves being stared at by two gatekeeping Gollems. They were about three meters tall and were made of steel. They were huge... Not exactly as huge as my Frame Gears, though. They seemed very old-fashioned and sturdy, that much was for sure.

A group of thuggish looking men was hanging around the entrance, and they wandered over to us.

“We got customers?” The roughest looking guy stared me down with a sneer on his face. If this place was actually a casino, his behavior certainly wouldn’t have been acceptable.

“If ya came here to buy, it’s one gold a person. If ya came here to sell, show us yer wares.”

“...We’re here to buy. Three gold, right?” The man just nodded along to my words. He clearly wasn’t here for conversation.

It was around a hundred thousand yen per person... Gollems didn’t seem to count as people in the eyes of the black market, but we had to pay for Rouge’s admission when we entered the main district of the casino city. Though I didn’t have to pay for Kohaku or Luli, so I didn’t really understand their standards.

I handed over three gold coins to the man. He wordlessly gestured toward the Gollems with his head.

We passed through the entrance and came out into a completely barren hall. It seemed like all the casino decorations had been completely cleared out.

Compared to the casino I’d entered the last time, this one looked tremendously shabby.

There were no poker or roulette tables, there was no fancy chandelier... There was just a bunch of grubby-looking tents and stalls lined up around the wide open space.

It was mostly set up like a flea market, but both the customers and the shopkeepers looked incredibly gruff or suspicious. The place certainly gave off a great big criminal underworld vibe.



“It’s rather lively, my liege.”

“Kind of feels like an antique market, yeah...” There were all kinds of things on sale in this place. There was jewelry, weird-shaped vases, even peculiar animals I’d never seen before. I found myself starry-eyed, looking around at everything I could find. There were a lot of devices that incorporated magical power into their design... I found a few magic artifacts, too.

Oh, crap. I’m getting off-track here...

I looked around the entire place, but I couldn’t see anything even vaguely resembling a Golem. I felt duped.

“Touya, in a market like this, the more expensive stuff like Golems are located in a different area. Euri’s already gone off to ask about it, so just wait a bit.” I’d personally thought the stuff I was looking at was pricey... But apparently, this was the cheap stuff. That made me more nervous about what Golems cost.

After a little bit, Euri returned. It seemed like the more expensive transactions were being made down in the basement.

We came to a heavy, black door. It was guarded by some beefy-looking men. Once again, we had to pay a toll. *Geez...*

I was annoyed, but I had to bear with it. I paid enough for three people, and we began our descent toward the basement.

We headed down into the basement and found a smaller room with various Golems on display. They came in all shapes and sizes. Some humanoid, some animalistic, some big, and some small.

It was pretty amazing to see them all lined up, the atmosphere was almost like being at an expo. Still, I was there to buy.

“Let’s go.”

“Hm...?”

Nia nagged me to keep moving. I was standing and gawping like a moron. We navigated past various customers as we looked over the different models available.

“I can’t tell the difference between legacy and factory models...”

“When you get used to seeing them, it’s pretty easy to tell based on the parts they have. The design is often telltale, too. For now, just use the price as a guide. Legacy Gollems are way more expensive than their factory counterparts. From time to time you might even find custom-made Gollems, too.”

Gollems excavated from ruins were known as Legacy Gollems.

Gollems that were mass-produced using modern technology were the Factory Gollems.

Then there were one-of-a-kind units that were made to order, and they were Custom Gollems.

Rouge was a Legacy Gollem, while Mr. Sancho’s Crab Bus was likely a Factory Gollem.

I looked at the prices and saw a few Gollems with an extra digit in their prices. Interestingly enough, though, nearly all of them were labeled as having no abilities.

It seemed like Gollems with skills were hard to come across.

“Over there, my lord.”

“Ohoho.” Kohaku pointed out a Gollem that didn’t have the tag denoting lack of skill.

The Gollem was green, around two meters tall. It was gorilla-shaped and had extremely thick arms. There was also what resembled some kind of tank on its back.

“Excuse me... Does this Gollem have a skill?”

“That it does, my boy. It has a limited range, but it can manipulate the earth.” That was interesting... It’d probably be a useful tool for engineering or labor. That price-tag was a little steep, though... It was close to five-hundred million yen. If it was left lying around, I wouldn’t have been surprised to see it get stolen... Though considering it was in the black market, I had my suspicions that it was probably stolen already.

I wondered if the Black Papillon group was handling security here...

I was fairly confident that I’d be able to steal everything in here and make it out, if I wanted... But I’d refrain from drastic acts like that.

“Oh, Touya. What about this one?”

“Hm? What about it?” Nia pointed at a set of machinery that looked more like a wearable power suit than any Golem I’d seen so far. It looked as though it was meant to be worn over the limbs and back, like a powered exoskeleton. I didn’t realize Golems could be so varied. “This one’s a Gear Golem. It might not look it, but it’s super useful. It works alongside its master and responds to your mental processes when you wear it.” It looked interesting, but I wanted an autonomous model.

“What about this one, Touya?” Euri led me to a series of lined-up display boxes. Specifically, she was pointing at the Golem in one of them.

It was about the size of a child. Around Rouge’s height and weight. This one was white at its base and had a more feminine form. There were two other identical models next to it, the only difference between the three were the fluorescent colors adorning their bodies. One was green, one blue, and one red. They even had glowing parts on their head that were meant to represent hair... They were incredibly crafted, even I could tell that much.

“Humanoid models are really rare...” Nia muttered to herself as she surveyed the three legacy units. When compared to the heavily-armored Rouge, or the exoskeleton and gorilla models I’d seen earlier, these ones looked a little more like humans.

To be honest I wasn’t as impressed as the onlookers. Back at home, I had a whole bunch of perfectly human-like gynoids living on Babylon. As realistically human as they were, these Gollems were still clearly inhuman and doll-like compared to the likes of Cesca.

“Do these ones have skills, then?”

“Sure do, son. Got my guarantee! But these little pretties ain’t been activated, so I can’t tell you what abilities they actually have.”

Gollems had devices in their central area that typically registered an individual as the Gollem’s master and then brought them online, but apparently, the device wasn’t working in these three models. For that reason, they’d never been activated. The shopkeeper had taken them to an engineer, but he wasn’t able to fix it, so he just decided to sell them as they were.

“That’s why I’m sellin’ them for so cheap. Wanna buy one?” The chubby man rubbed his hands together as he grinned.

Hmph... Is this seriously cheap? That’s seventy royals, that’s several hundred million yen... That’s a hella high price...

The gorilla one from earlier was only 500 million, and it had an ability, too... Are you telling me these are better?

“Geez, kid... Look, right here. See?” The shopkeeper pointed toward the chest of one of the Gollems. There was a tiny ☆ mark, a series of small numbers, and some words I couldn’t make out engraved there.

“Ohh... A star mark! That explains it... Are these Gollems part of the Etoile Series?”

“Ahh... I see.”

Euri and Nia seemed satisfied by the meaning of the symbols. Euri turned to explain the situation. Apparently, Gollems marked with that star were part of the Etoile Series, which are considered extremely advanced and high-performance models even amongst other Legacy Gollems.

The mark probably represented the person who originally crafted them.

I was also quietly informed of the small crown emblem engraved into Rouge's neck. Apparently, that was the way to identify if a Gollem was part of the crown series, too.

"Is it fake, then?"

"No way. You can't bring fake goods into the black market. He'd be barred from coming back, or even killed..." That made sense enough. Even without knowledge of what their skills were, just knowledge of the fact that they were Etoiles was enough to drive up market price. That was the nature of the market, for you...

"So, laddie? You buying or not, hm? These models don't usually go for this cheap..."

"Hm..." In all honesty, I was looking for a much tougher robot to act as a guard. A menacing one like Akagane would've been ideal. These three looked more like they'd be suited to being caretakers or housekeepers more than anything.

Doctor Babylon would be able to analyze them and safely activate them once I brought them back home, I knew that much. Even if she failed, I knew she'd keep trying until she figured them out completely. Thus, I made my decision.

"Alright. I'll take them... But before we ring it up, hear me out."

I activated **[Storage]** and pulled out an adamantite ingot, and showed it to the suspicious trader. He looked at it for a while as the pieces began to click in his mind. Then his eyes shot wide open.

“Th-That’s... adamantite?! Where in the world did you...”

“Ah-ah-ah. Don’t forget the rules. No asking about origins, right? I will take all three of these Gollems off your hands for a hundred and thirty royals, and this ingot.”

“A-All three...?! H-Hmph... L-Let me be sure it’s genuine first...”

He brought out a small device similar to the one Mr. Sancho had used and determined whether or not the item I had was counterfeit or not.

“It’s the real deal... Hrmph... Let me think... Mm... Hm...”

He began pondering to himself, eyes fixed on the ingot. I was hoping that this transaction would be good enough, I’d already lost money by paying for fees and stuff. I would have liked to have paid the full price with ingots exclusively, but that would’ve looked too suspicious.

I could tell the man was weighing the worth on proverbial scales in his head. He was measuring the worth of three unactivated Etoiles against a whole ingot of incredibly rare material.

Eventually, he stopped focusing and smiled softly.

“Very well, laddie. I’ll accept your offer. You can have all three for that much.”

“It’s a deal, then.” I handed over the goods, and he happily relinquished the Gollems. I bought all three so I’d have spares just in case anything happened... Is what I’d say pragmatically, but a softer side of me felt bad separating them. They looked kind of like sisters all lined up as they were.

I suddenly invoked [**Storage**], sucking up all three of them along with their display cases. The shopkeeper seemed almost disturbed by the sight, but he pretended not to be too bothered.

“Even if they are Etoiles, are you sure about having three of them?”

“Mmm... I dunno, but the way I look at it is these are really high-tier ones, right? I might never get the chance to buy one again.” I shrugged toward Nia’s comment. Either way, that was one objective down. Now all I had to do was secure a place to set down the disruptor. I wondered if flying out to an uninhabited island might be the best idea. Just as I was thinking about my next step, I heard a sudden scream.

“...What’s that?”

“...Huh?” I suddenly stopped in my tracks, prompting Nia to ask me what was up. She hadn’t heard it.

I heard it again. There was screaming mingled in with the hustle and bustle of the crowd. I could hear it clearly. It wasn’t just one scream. There were a lot of people screaming now.

I looked to the side and found that Rouge had also stopped dead in its tracks. It looked upward. Of course, upward... The screams were coming from the floor above.

“La, la... Lalala...”

What the...? Just as the screams died down, I heard a happy singing voice take their place.

In a flash, the heavy door that led to the underground was sliced in half and knocked down.

The door was now on the floor in pieces, and I could clearly hear more of that joyful voice coming from the darkness. The singer was coming toward us, down the stairs.

“...Such beautiful, sparkling eyes...♪ Let’s take a spoon to them...♪
From blue, to green, to black, to red... Let’s make a mess of them...♪”

“Wait, that voice...?!” Nia reflexively stiffened up and turned her gaze toward the darkness behind the doorway.

After a short time, a lone girl appeared and clambered over the debris.

She wore frilly purple clothing with a bit of a gothic aesthetic. She also wore a short skirt. She also carried a purple umbrella. Her aesthetic was similar to Leen’s, but a lot less prim and proper.

She also wore slim-framed glasses, but the deep purple eyes behind them looked almost lifeless... She was smiling broadly, but there was just something entirely wrong about her.

Her long, amethyst hair spilled down far past her shoulders. She resembled a doll in some ways. And then, as she stepped fully into the light, it became clear that both her skin and clothing were adorned with patches of fresh blood.

Perhaps what concerned me the most, though, was the Golem standing next to her. It was tiny, almost like a knight, and it was deep purple. The scythe in its hand and the ragged black cape over its shoulders made me subconsciously liken it to the Grim Reaper himself. The aura it exuded, and its physical features... They were almost identical to the red Golem by my side.

“H-Hey, who are they...?”

“That purple Golem is a crown. Fanatic Viola. And the woman with it...”

“Luna... Trieste... It’s her... The Frenzied Mistress...”

Frenzied...? She seemed calm to me... As I wondered how they knew her, or what that nickname meant, the woman started to spin around in front of the doorway while twirling her umbrella.

“Please, please...♪ Oh pretty, pretty please...♪ I’ll gouge you oh-so-neatly, so please give me your eyes...♪ Please let me take your heart...♪” She kept singing to herself, as if oblivious to the blood smeared on her... As if oblivious to the horrified crowd around her. But then, her smile widened. She stopped twirling, and she acknowledged her onlookers.

“Please let me take your blood, your guts, your spine...♪”



“There are a lot of pretty little Gollems here, hehe... It’s a horrible waste, isn’t it? Should I trash them all? Should I smash them all? Should I turn everyone here into sticky, squishy messes...? Who doesn’t want to get hurt by mommy Luna?” The smiling, bloodstained woman finally identified herself as she folded up her umbrella.

“Viola, sweetie. Please go right ahead.”

“Beep.”

The small Golem leaped down into the marketplace. It swung down the oversized scythe as it landed, cleaving one of the massive display Gollems in half. *Whoa, that’s some edge!*

“What the...?!” The man who was selling the now-bisected Golem looked on in shock. The purple Golem then transformed the scythe into a naginata spear and thrust it deep into the salesman’s chest.

“Whuh...?” The weapon slid back out of him and he fell to the ground, blood gurgling from the gaping wound in his torso. People in the area began to scream at the sudden, unexpected kill.

The screams quickly chained from person to person, and everyone began to run in all directions.

“Rouge!”

“Acknowledged.” At Nia’s command, the red crown turned to face the purple crown down. Rouge launched a punch, which Viola blocked with the handle of its weapon.

“Ohoho? Little red’s here...? I wonder why...” Luna tilted her head softly before staring over at us.

“You bitch! What are you and that purple thing doing here?!”

“My, my... It’s little Nia... What a funny little coincidence, hehe... Or maybe this was fate.” Rouge and Viola continued to clash in the marketplace, as the woman named Luna drew out an exaggerated look of surprise.

Rouge didn’t have a weapon on hand, so it was fighting at a disadvantage against Viola. Plus it was so small, so it was majorly lacking in reach as well. They were both crowns, so they were probably evenly matched... Which meant the presence of a weapon could have been the deciding factor.

Rouge was trying to lead the fight to a less populated area, but it was struggling. Every time Rouge dodged an attack, Viola brought its weapon carelessly crashing down. With each new strike, more innocent bystanders were sliced into meaty chunks, and more Golems were reduced to scrap metal. Blood, guts, and robotic components soared through the air with each successive slash.

“Kohaku, Luli! Get people to safety, now!”

“As you command!”

“Very well!” Kohaku and Luli returned to their Divine Beast forms, moving to rescue any stunned or fallen people in the area.

Viola continued to recklessly attack Rouge, without any consideration for its surroundings.

“Luna! Stop Viola at once! Why are you doing this?!”

“Hmm? What do you mean by why? I don’t understand you at all, cute widdle Nia... I’m only here because it’s a fun party, don’t you think...?” Luna tilted her head to the side again. Her behavior was... Weird, honestly. She was freaking me out.

“It’s oh so fun, don’t you think? Gouging out eyes, I mean... Everyone’s eyes are so different. Don’t you think they’re pretty? There are red eyes and blue eyes... All kinds of eyes! The only bad part about them is how quickly they shrivel and rot... But... Mmf... Ahhh... Gouging them out is so fun that it makes me oh so quivery and shivery between my legs...!”

“You bitch...!” Pointless talking to her... I don’t know if she actually means the weird crap she just said, but this is clearly a dangerous situation... Despite the ongoing carnage, the girl continued to walk down the steps while waving her umbrella around.

I moved forward, intent on taking Luna out, but the ground suddenly began to shake. A group of men and two large Golems stomped out in front of the woman. They were the guards from the Casino entrance... That probably meant they worked for Black Papillon.

“Hey, psycho! Call off your Golem now!”

“And if I say no?”

“Then you can fuckin’ die!” The man ordered his Golem to swing its fist down upon Luna, and it obeyed. The three-meter tall Golem struck the girl directly in the chest. A sickening crack rang out as her ribcage was caved inward, and she was blown backward into the wall. Her body rolled along the ground like a ragdoll. The attack had instantly killed her.

“What a fool she was... Now take care of that purple Golem, and hurry up!” The huge Golem stomped its way over to Viola.

“...That’s pointless, silly. Viola can’t break... Viola is Viola, after all...”

“What the...?!” Luna slowly rose from where she’d fallen. Her arms were snapped and bent backward, and one of her shins was bent at an angle.

A strange purple smoke rose from her body, and I heard the sounds of mending, clipping flesh and bone. Her limbs snapped back into their proper positions.

“How did she do that...?”

“That’s the purple crown’s ability. Its master is granted an immortal body... And the crown itself can regenerate as well.” *An immortal body...? Is she undead or something? Gross!* I nodded along to Euri’s explanation, when suddenly Rouge was struck by Viola’s weapon, causing Nia to scream.

“Rouge!” Nia dashed toward Rouge, a look of horror on her face.

Viola turned around, ignoring the other crown and its master, before setting its sights on the massive Golem headed toward it.

The purple Golem dodged the lumbering fist with ease and brought its weapon, now transformed back into a scythe, slicing through the giant’s body. A screech of metal sliding against metal echoed out as the Golem fell apart.

“You sillies... How boring can you be...? Why don’t you try killing me, you old grumps? But I bet you can’t lay a hand on me...”

“Bitch...!” One of the guards charged forward and thrust his spear toward Luna. It sank deep into her chest, and the bloody tip spurted out of her back.

“H-Heh... There, take that... I killed you... How do you like th— Wha?!”

“So boring... It’s just so boring, ehehe...” Luna shrugged off the hit like it was nothing, and gripped the spear embedded in her front.

She jerked her wrist and snapped the weapon like it was a toothpick.
What the hell?!

I remembered that some undead species had their mental limiters removed, giving them reckless levels of muscle strain that they couldn't tap into while they were alive... I wondered if it was the same for this woman.

"Hmph!" Luna reached into her own torso and pulled the spear back through her body. She then twirled it around and drove it into the horrified face of the guard she'd been attacked by, pulverizing his brains.

"Here's your weapon back, cutie!" The man fell to the ground like a sack of bricks, blood spilling from his head. The girl smiled wide as she spun around and thrust her umbrella at another guard, who was frozen in fear.

"Hngh?!" A crumpling sound reverberated as the umbrella stalled, bent... And after a little more force, burst out of the man's back.

"Aww... It broke. That was my favorite umbrella too, you old meanie... It's all your fault, you know...? How about you say sorry by letting mommy Luna dig your eyeballs out?" The immobilized man began to weep in despair as the girl's slender fingers reached out toward his face.

"**[Teleport].**" I teleported toward the girl and grasped her hand. It was slick with blood. I could feel her struggle against me. *Holy shit, she's strong... Just where the hell is she keeping power like this in a body like that?!*

"Goodness me... Where did you come from...?" The purple girl looked at me through her glasses. She seemed confused. I placed my other hand on the wounded man and invoked recovery magic.

"Oh my... Mister... Who are you? Do you have a problem with mommy Luna...?"

“I don’t know why you’re doing this, but I can’t just sit by and watch you kill anyone else. Even if I have to use force, I’ll stop you.”

“Ahahahaaaa! So weiiird! Why would you even do that? And how...?”

“Like this... **[Gravity]**.” I flowed magic through the hand that grasped her wrist, and she began to collapse until she was completely immobilized.

“Oh goodness... What’s all this...? I can’t even move...”

“Now! Get her!” The guards immediately charged her and moved to restrain her. But the purple Golem noticed what was happening, and leaped to its master’s side. The sickle flashed in the dim light of the room as it swung around.

“Guh!” I jumped backward a good distance to avoid its scythe, but the guards weren’t so lucky. They fell to the ground, their innards spilling out all over the place.

“Beep.” The purple Golem made a robotic noise as it transformed its scythe into a naginata once again. I instinctively took out Brunhild from my waist and transformed it into Blade Mode, then swung back against the weapon as it came soaring toward me.

“Be-Beep?” Viola stopped for a moment, realizing that my Phrasium blade had actually broken the handle of the spear. I charged forward, using the opening as a chance to slash the Golem itself.

Viola shuddered and fell silent, cleaved clean in half. Both parts of the little machine rolled inactively on the ground. “Phew...” I let out a heavy breath before getting my bearings. There were dead people everywhere. Just as I was about to start treating the injured with my magic...

“Eheheheeee! Wow, mister! You really cut Viola, huh?” The woman was clapping loudly. I turned around in surprise and found that Luna was still on the ground, but she was clapping her hands.

That’s impossible. I haven’t canceled my spell, how is she moving?!

“Hey... Mister... Can you tell me your name?”

“...It’s Touya. Mochizuki Touya.”

“Touuuuya? Oooh, Touya...? That’s such a pretty name... It’s so nice... You know, Tou... It seems like you might even be a match for mommy Luna... But not now, what a shame... We can’t do it today, okay? If it’s okay, could I ask that you kill me another time? In a better place?”

“Sorry, but I’m not really trying to make a habit of killing people.”

“Oh my...? You’re so shy, mister... That’s kinda charming too, though... Say, do you want mommy Luna to give you a spanking? What do you think, Viola?”

Luna suddenly looked right past me. I turned around in horror, to find Viola standing behind me. It was fully formed, regenerated just like Luna. Its weapon was still damaged, though.

“What...?!” Seriously?! The purple crown regenerates that fast?! Holy shit... I need to take this thing out in another way, I guess...

“Viola really likes you too, Tou... Ehehe... I’m really happy we got to meet you.”

“Don’t mess with us, you maniaaac!” A burning red fist slammed into Viola from the side. The impact caused the purple Golem to slam into a nearby wall, leaving a dent in it.

Blood Rouge, the red crown, was standing tall and righteous. Its arms were engulfed in flames. It chased after its target and continued to attack.

Each follow-up punch landed with enough force to shake the entire casino. It's like Rouge was a completely different machine. *What the hell is going on here?* "You purple witch... I'll get you back for what you did to me and Rouge!"

"Oh dear, little Nia... Could you maybe stop being a pain?" Nia stomped out in front of Luna, who was pouting. When I saw Nia's state, my eyes went wide in shock.

"Wh-What the... Nia... Your hand..." A steady stream of blood was dripping from Nia's balled-up fist. She clearly had a massive gash in the middle of her palm... So much of the sanguine liquid was coming out that her entire fist was dyed red.

"Please don't worry. My blood is necessary to trigger Rouge's skill."

"But..." I couldn't ignore that at all, so I cast restoration magic on Nia's hand. The wound wasn't too deep, so it closed up without too much hassle.

"Your magic is incredible, Touya..."

"It only patched up the wound, it didn't restore any of the blood you lost... So don't overdo it." Luna, who had been watching us, suddenly blushed and stared at me with her dead, doll-like eyes.

"Oh my! Magic! You're a mage, Tou? You're really a mage? Ohhh... Aaah... That's so nice, that's... Mfff... That's so good! I'm getting wet... Aaah...!" *What the hell are you moaning about?! What the hell?!* I looked at her with a disturbed expression on my face as she slowly rose up and bashfully hugged her own body. Then her hands slid down between her thighs.

Holy shit you're actually worse than Cesca.

"She's a perverted psycho..."

"That's just one of my charming features, cutie! Ahh, ohhh... Ahhn... My heart's going so fast! Gosh... I feel even hotter than I do when I

pluck out people's eyes... That's amazing... I'm dripping..." Luna started talking nonsense before directing her gaze toward me. Her breath was growing increasingly sharp and ragged.

"...Mm... Let me eat you..." A chill ran right up my spine, and I shuddered as she said that. I didn't want to hear that from her. Frankly, she was some kind of undead, and her saying that brought zombie movies more to mind than anything else.

Luna dashed toward me in a mere matter of seconds. I tried to step back, but she grabbed me and caught my leg between her thighs. Her speed was immense... I was completely sandwiched by her freakish strength.

Luna's breath became more hoarse and ragged as she gasped and moaned, grinding her crotch up against my thigh.

"Please kill me next time... Mmff..." After she spoke, she stuck out her tongue and slowly dragged it along my cheek.



“Wh-What the hell are you doing to him?!”

“Ehehe, are you jealous, Nia?!” Nia charged forward to hit Luna, but she parted from my side and dodged it with little difficulty.

“Viola! Time to go!” Viola turned away from its ongoing conflict with Rouge and jumped toward its master. Luna then hopped on to its shoulders as they began to escape. It looked ridiculous, like a little kid giving a piggyback.

“I had fun today! See you later!” Luna blew a kiss as Viola emitted a purple mist from its wrist. I immediately realized that it was bad news.

“Gather forth, Water! Swirling Shield: [Aqua Shell]!” I summoned a glob of water that sucked up all the mist. The smoke began to mix with the water until it turned a very foul color. I then carefully moved the water and placed it in a pot of flowers.

Just as I did that, the flowers in the pot shriveled up and died. I knew it, it was some kind of toxin.

Luna and her Gollem had escaped. *What the hell just happened... That was seriously nuts...*

“Tsk... That damn woman escaped again...!” Nia yelled and kicked at the ground out of frustration. I could understand her feelings.

Oh, that’s right... I gotta use my magic to heal any wounded survivors...

Huh...? As I started to walk, I felt a strange sensation on one of my legs. I looked down.

“...Eugh...” There was a sticky, damp stain on my right thigh. *Don’t tell me...*

I grimaced when I realized what it was. I slowly turned to Nia, who was also grimacing.

I moved toward her, but she held up her palms as if to ward me off.

“Sorry, I don’t wanna catch cooties.”

Wow, they even have the concept of cooties in this world... Damn, this day has been horrible.



“Come forth, Light! Neutral Therapy: [Area Heal].” I quietly cast a wide-range recovery spell on everyone in the black market... I didn’t want to draw attention to myself, after all. But it might have been a bit late for that.

There weren’t as many dead people as I’d initially assumed, thankfully... It seemed like Rouge had successfully held Viola back from doing the worst it could’ve done. But that was only the case for the basement.

Euri went up to confirm it and reported back that the upper level was like a vision of hell itself. Everyone was dead. Bits of guts, bone, and brains were strewn all over.

I didn’t want Nia, Rouge, and Euri getting any undue attention. They were members of the Red Cats, after all. I used **[Gate]** to covertly return us to the hideout.

Once we got back there, Euri made some tea. I sipped at it and finally reflected on what was going on.

“That Golem was... Terrifyingly strong.” Euri had warned me about the crown’s regeneration, but it was far more intense than I’d thought. Viola seemed to be about as good as regenerating as the Phrasium armor on the custom Frame Gears.

Or maybe it was even stronger than that... I sliced it in half, and it came back like it was nothing. That wasn’t just a regular regeneration, it was way faster and way more intense. I had no idea how to even take down something with an ability like that.

"So that's the kind of thing the crowns are capable of..." I shuddered. Nia glanced to Rouge, then to me. She spoke up.

"Crown Golems possess incredible power, but they demand a price from their masters. There are risks. Her immortality doesn't come without a cost."

"What kind of cost?"

"Rouge, for example, is capable of generating flames and gaining strength directly proportional to the amount of blood that I feed it. The more blood I spill, the stronger it grows. My father, the former leader of the Red Cats... That's how he died. He gave as much blood as his life would allow, to turn Rouge into an unstoppable force." *A blood pact?! What the hell... He died to that? Preserved blood didn't cut it, either. It had to be freshly spilled blood. I remembered hearing that a human would die if they lost a third of their blood, so her father must have gone over that limit...*

"Then what's the price paid for the purple crown...?"

"I'm not entirely certain if this is true... But I heard that the price is sanity. They slowly reach new depths of depravity and madness, until eventually... Once they don't remember who they are anymore, or what they're doing, Viola will end them and seek a new master. They say that only the purple crown can kill the purple master. From what I understand, Viola has killed each and every one of its previous masters. That's the penalty for a body that can't be killed any other way." *Does that mean her crazy attitude was because she's been losing her mind to the crown...? Maybe... But it kind of felt like she still had her personality...*

"Despite their bodies, the purple masters tend to have the shortest lives. The other crown masters like me don't really need to worry about dying, so long as they live carefully, but the purple masters have their deaths all but guaranteed." I wondered how the immortal

bodies were even granted... Was it magic, perhaps? I thought maybe she was undead, and that seemed like the closest approximation. She had dull, lifeless eyes, after all.

Purple masters would lose their sanity until all semblance of reason was stripped from their minds... They'd descend into madness, and then be put down by the source of it.

I opened up my map and ran a search for Luna's location. Nothing came up. She was probably carrying an artifact or something around that prevented her from being traced. It wouldn't have surprised me if there were Golems in this world with abilities similar to my **[Search]** spell. When you thought about it, the Golem's singular abilities were similar to people's unique Null spells.

According to Nia, she was also in possession of an item that could alter the memories of those she encountered, resulting in survivors of her attacks only recalling a purple crown and a "frenzied mistress." The people she caused to blackout in fear were usually the ones that were left alive, and the ones with hazy memories. The fear remained inscribed into them, and even asking them about what happened is enough to send them into shock. It seemed like Luna and her crown were like wandering reapers. But eventually Luna herself would end up the target of a culling...

Golems from the crown series seemed like double-edged swords. I was kind of concerned that the Etoiles might have had similar drawbacks...

"The Etoile Golems don't have any trade-off, don't worry. Crowns are just complete exceptions. The stories go that the crowns were created by a Golem engineer named Chrom Ranchesse, but the stories also go that the man was completely insane. He lived in the ancient civilization that was destroyed." I felt a strange sense of déjà vu upon hearing that. I wondered if the template for geniuses somehow overlapped with the template for complete weirdoes...

Doctor Babylon was useless for anything besides research and inventing...

Recently that old coot had installed a camera in the girl's bathroom... I caught her peeping on my fiancées and cackling like an old man... Naturally, I smacked her over the head and told her to remove it.

I pulled out the three Gollems I'd purchased from my **[Storage]**. I wasn't able to store living, or at least sentient, beings with my magic. I'd tried storing the Babylon mini-bots in there once, and it just didn't work. It was probable that after I activated these three, I wouldn't be able to put them back inside... But I needed Nia to tell me how to turn them on to begin with.

I opened the display case and took out the red-themed Golem. It was definitely child-sized... It was actually shorter than Rouge, now that I got a closer look.

It had a feminine form, specifically a young girl's body. Its base color was white all over. It didn't have any human facial features other than a face. No ears, no nose, no mouth. It was kind of like it was wearing a mask... she didn't look uncanny or anything. Its features were still human.

"Wow... It really does look human-like..." Euri muttered quietly while inspecting the Golem.

These Gollems were probably not designed for combat. This type was often more intelligent than standard Gollems and was probably created with a humanoid appearance so they could look after children or mind houses.

Even though Rouge and Viola were humanoid too, these Etoiles were not clad in armor, so they looked a lot more like people than the crowns did.

But to be honest, I was too used to the Babylon sisters. Whenever Nia or Euri commented on how human the Etoiles looked, I just didn't buy it.

"So, how do you activate them?"

"You're supposed to place your hand on the chest area, release a little of your magic, and say 'Open.'" I didn't understand, but I did as I was told.

"Open." A small whoosh of shifting air came from the Etoile as her chest opened up. The interior was full of peculiar machinery. There was a dice-like cube in there that glowed bright green, it was contained inside a strange glass container that resembled a softball.

"The cube is called a G-Cube. It's a Gollem's core. Put your hand in and pull it out." I reached out to the glassy surface of the circular container and found my fingers passing through it. It was gross... Kind of like dipping my hand into a jar of Vaseline. The sticky liquid engulfed all my digits.

I pulled my hand out with the tiny emerald cube, and strangely enough none of the weird liquid came out with it. It felt really weird.

"So long as the G-Cube remains, you can reconstruct a Gollem around it. It loses its memories and skills, though. Those things are stored in the Q-Crystal, located within the head." It seemed like the Q-Crystal operated as the brain, while the G-Crystal operated as the heart. Those combined with bodies crafted in the ancient civilization made up the Legacy Gollems.

You could create a new Gollem by incorporating just the Q-Crystal from a Legacy Gollem, but the end result would be vastly inferior to the original.

Plus, it seemed that Gollems, when inactive for a period of a few hundred years or so, periodically reset their memories. That was why

there weren't really any Legacy Golems with memories of how the ancient civilization used to be.

"So, what do I do with this?"

"You need to register as the Golem's master using the G-Cube. It needs to take in some of your genetic info. Anything should be fine, a bit of hair or a fingernail clipping should be enough." I pulled a strand of hair out of my head and pressed it against the G-Cube. The strand slowly melted into it and vanished.

I put the G-Cube back into its container and locked its chest back up.

In order to steal someone else's Golem, you needed to overwrite the registration with your own genetics. You had to shut down the Golem and open it up, too... Which was definitely difficult. Most Golems would definitely resist having their master changed, after all.

Even taking someone's Golem by force wouldn't do, you'd still need to open up its chest and override ownership.

Golems were personal property, so doing that was highly illegal. There were security measures in place to prevent Golem theft, but I didn't need to worry about that right now.

I heard a quiet hum from the Etoile after installing the G-Cube, slowly a faint red light appeared on her translucent parts. But that was only for a moment, the lights gradually grew dim.

"Hmm... This isn't right. Usually, it would've started by now."

"I wonder if it's broken, then... The shopkeeper did say something like that." *Hmmm... It did activate for a moment, though... Let's see here... It kind of feels like an old, broken appliance. Maybe there's a loose connection in there somewhere? It might take a bit more than a few smacks on the back to fix, though...*

I decided to check it out.

“[Analyze].” I used my magic to get a feel for the Golem’s structure. I didn’t have much knowledge about it, so I didn’t really know what most of what I learned meant.

But I could understand how the magic flow inside it worked. The magic flow from the G-Cube wasn’t reaching the Q-Crystal, which was probably the issue. There was a blockage around the neck area. It was kind of like a blood vessel blockage in humans... But that kind of thing would be lethal if it happened to a person.

I walked around the Golem and checked its neck. I noticed a small, clear cube-shaped protrusion about one centimeter in diameter.

I pushed it. Nothing happened. It didn’t really look like a switch. I used **[Analysis]** on it, which showed me that there was a small magical barrier around it, disrupting the flow of magic around the Golem’s neck.

Is this a safety mechanism or something? Maybe if I’d bought it legally, I would’ve gotten a key to disable this part or something.

Let’s see if I can’t do something about this...

“[Cracking].” I began to work myself into the Golem’s startup procedures. My Null spell completely overrode the activation requirements for the Etoile unit in front of me. It was impossible to modify the entire thing, but I was able to modify the small portion that kept the little barrier active.

Once the barrier was removed, the magic flow managed to move upward to the head. Then, the clear reddish parts all over the Etoile’s body began to light up softly. The magic must have reached the Q-Crystal.

“Oh, it moved.”

“Wow, you did it!” The two of them cheered, but were promptly cut off by a voice that came from the Etoile.

“Activating... Activating... Model Number ETA-01 has been formally activated. All systems nominal. Register master name, and machine name.” *Ooh, it’s talking. Or... Well, I guess it feels more like a recorded message.*

“Uhh... Master name is Mochizuki Touya. Machine name is... Uhh... Hold on...” Etoile meant star, so I wanted to give her a name related to astronomy.

A few famous red stars from my old world were Antares from the Scorpius Constellation and Betelgeuse from the Orion constellation. None of those names sounded particularly girly, though.

I guess it doesn’t have to be a star name.

“Uhm... Your name is Ruby, then.”

“Understood. Change in master registration is ongoing. Reboot initiated.” I’d given Kohaku and the others names based on rare minerals and stones, too. So I figured naming the Golems that way would be fine. Kougyoku’s name kind of meant ruby too... But that wasn’t a big deal.

It went without saying that I’d call the other two Sapphire and Emerald... But they were a little long. Saph and Emerl were probably enough.

Ruby stopped moving for a brief moment, then made a low noise. It turned its head toward me.

“Can you understand me?”

“Ping.” Ruby nodded toward me. *Huh, she can’t talk? But she spoke earlier.*

“This Golem probably has intuitive learning. It’ll only have limited noises and motions to begin with, but it should be able to learn over time without an issue.” As Nia spoke, Rouge nodded along. In a

sense, she was kind of like an infant right now, so I'd need to dedicate some time to her development and education.

...Is it gonna be safe to entrust something so infantile to Doctor Babylon...? I don't really trust her with child-rearing.

"Oh well, that sounds fine. Nice to meet you, Ruby."

"Ping." Ruby nodded again. *Is she gonna be able to talk down the line...? I wonder if I can get the doctor to modify her so she learns faster... But maybe that's a little unethical?*

I was about to activate the blue Etoile, Saph when Nia suddenly interjected and told me something interesting.

I was told that when registering a Gollem, it was best to have only one per person. It was possible for signal interference to kick in if you had more than one Gollem under your command, which had a severe impact on performance.

For example, if you ordered Gollem A to move to the left, and Gollem B to move to the right, the interference might cause the Gollems to obey the wrong orders, or just not even move at all.

That could cause a fatal mistake in a combat situation.

But apparently, if the Gollems were of the same type and manufacturer, signal interference was much less likely. Since all three of these were Etoiles, it was statistically less likely that their orders would get messed up... But the chance wasn't zero, so I was told to keep it in mind.

I overrode Emerl and Saph in much the same way using **[Cracking]**, then registered myself as master.

"Nice to meet you both."

"Pong."

“Pang.” Ruby said ping, Saph said pong, and Emerl said pang, apparently.

I decided to test out the signal interference to make sure things were alright.

“Ruby, raise your right hand. Saph, raise your left hand. Emerl, raise both your hands.” I gave them all conflicting orders, but they followed them without any issues. It seemed like there wasn’t an issue.

These three reminded me of the ninja trio. Sarutobi Homura, Kirigakure Shizuku, and Fuma Nagi. Mostly because the names were associated with fire, water, and wind... And it kind of went with the whole red, blue, green theming.

I wondered about entrusting the Gollems to those three girls... That probably wasn’t possible, though. The idea of Ninja Gollems sounded cool, though...

Plus I’d purchased these three to get them to guard the Dimensional Disruptor, anyway.

... It feels a bit late to ask this, but... Are they even gonna be able to protect the place? These Etoiles seemed more suited to caring for people and nursing... I had no idea if they were good for combat. It was a tad too late to worry about it, I decided to make it work. They’d probably be fine if I equipped them with some decent weapons...

It would probably be fine. I decided not to worry about it. My focus now was finding a place to install the Dimensional Disruptor, anyways. An uninhabited place would probably be best.

If there was a place similar to Dragoness Island like in the regular world, that’d be pretty good. I didn’t think anyone would approach something like that.

I asked if there was any place like that. The answer I got was unexpected.

“...There’s a place like that?”

“If you’re talking about an island of Dragons... Then yeah. Drakliff Island. Nobody ever goes there because it’s full of raging Dragons. Their nest is there.”

The name was kinda similar. I looked it up on my map. If I looked at it compared to the regular world, it was found in the middle of the landlocked sea that bordered Hannock, Roadmare, Yulong, and Regulus. It was a little smaller than Brunhild.

Hmm... Nobody checking it out because of Dragons is pretty convenient... Luli might be able to help me with negotiations, too.

“Will the Dragons of this world listen to you?”

“If there are Ancient or Elder Dragons, then it should be quite fine... I think, at least. But if the island only has young Dragons that aren’t aware of my existence, we may see resistance. If that’s the case, then leave it to me... I’ll be able to overwhelm them and dominate them by force.”

That seemed to make sense. Young Dragons certainly seemed trigger-happy. They were a species with long lifespans, so their youths were much longer. A one-hundred-year-old Dragon was about as reasonable as a ten-year-old human. If there were only young Dragons, then Luli would just have to assert her dominance. Hopefully, the elders would be around, though. I didn’t want it to come to that.

Still, if we could get the support of the Dragons of this world, they’d make excellent guards.

“Alright, guess I’ll head there. Thanks for your help, seriously.”

"We'd also like to thank you for teaching us magic. Are you sure we can keep these, though?" Nia gestured toward the spellstone fragments and the beginner's book of spells I'd left behind for them.

"I don't mind it, I got that book when I was starting out as well. You won't be able to read the words unless you wear these glasses, though." I handed the translator glasses over to Nia. The basic spells of all six schools of magic were covered by the book, so I thought she'd find it useful.

"Just a reminder, though... Be careful with who you teach, alright? My own teachers taught me that magic is something you use to bring joy to others, not misery." I'd called them my teachers, but they were Linze and Leen, my fiancées.

"I understand. I swear on the name of the Red Cats, the name of we chivalrous thieves. We'll only make villains cry with our spells." Nia grinned widely. I trusted her not to abuse the power, so it would be fine. Or rather, I trusted Est to keep her in line.

I left the tent. I wanted to fly straight to the island with Luli, but it'd be too conspicuous if I rode her here. Anyone in the vicinity would probably discover this place if they saw strange things flying out of the fort.

I decided to use **[Teleport]** to leave instead.

"Alright, I'm off. Hope we can meet again."

"Okay!" I shook hands with the two girls, then used **[Teleport]** to reach some nearby mountains. I thought about teleporting directly to the island, but I didn't want to get the location wrong and teleport into the sea. Better to be safe than sorry, after all.

I had Luli transform into her Heavenly Beast form, and I hopped on to her back along with Kohaku, Ruby, and the other Gollems. I cast **[Invisible]** to keep us concealed.

“Let’s depart, my lord.” Luli flew up into the air, and we began flying northward.

Our destination was Drakliff island.

I hoped the Dragons in this world were more reasonable than the ones in the world I’d come from.



“Grauuuuuurgh!” A massive Copper Dragon stood before us on the sandy beach. It raised a deafening roar.

I had a vague idea of what it was saying, but I checked just to be sure.

“What did he say...?”

“He said... Keep out of my way or I’ll kill you.” Luli let out a small sigh as she sat perched on my shoulder.

We were currently in a small fishing village near Drakliff island.

I was going to get a little bit of information on the island before heading directly there, but just as I started asking around, this Copper Dragon had come down and started to attack the town.

Luli and I stepped in to interfere, and then it began roaring.

“Does it have a reason for attacking the town? Did the people here do something bad?”

“No, it seems to be yelling at us for interfering with its playtime.”
It’s just playing around? Just like that goddamn Black Dragon... Do the Dragons in this world look down on other species, too? Sure they’re strong, but this is still a little much...

“He’s young, then?”

“Yes. In human terms, he’s equivalent to sixteen or so. He has all that power, but doesn’t have much in the way of empathy.” I couldn’t stand for this Dragon coming in and messing with people just for fun.

Several houses had already been burned to a crisp, but thankfully nobody had died.

“Can you tell him to go back to the island, or not?”

“I don’t think he’s going to listen...” Luli tried speaking to the Dragon in their mother tongue, but it responded by roaring even angrier. Then, without much warning, it spewed out a massive fireball in our direction.

“**[Absorb].**” The blazing fire breath dispersed into the air, vanishing like a fine mist. The spell I’d invoked rendered magic attacks inert, and turned them into my own power.

For the most part, Dragon breath was internal magical combustion that used the magic supply of the Dragon spewing it out. That’s why absorbing it was pretty easy.

“No point in talking, huh? I guess we don’t need to hold back, then.”

“My lord... Can I slice this one to pieces already? I can’t stand how it’s treating you... For it to be talking to you like that.” I wasn’t too surprised by Kohaku’s behavior here. She was on the verge of exploding. She didn’t understand the Dragon’s language or anything, but she could tell that the enemy was probably badmouthing me pretty badly.

I could see her crouching down, as if preparing to pounce.

“Please wait a moment, Kohaku. Let me deal with it, alright? I will discipline this improper child.”

“...Hmph. Don’t hold back just because it’s one of yours.”

“I never hold back, Kohaku. I’m not like you.” Luli flew from my shoulder and returned to her true form. She was a beautiful Blue Dragon, now on full display along the beach.

The Copper Dragon saw her transform, which caused it to back away in slight fear.

“Gaauuuuuuugh!” The Copper Dragon let out another roar in a futile attempt to intimidate her. She ignored it, but I noticed one of her eyes twitched... *Did it make you mad...? What did it say?* Luli suddenly inhaled, then let loose a flame far more intense than the one the Copper Dragon had breathed earlier.

The Copper Dragon was engulfed in the azure flame until it was reduced to charcoal. After a small time, its entire form crumbled away. *G-Geez...*

“...You might’ve overdone it a bit.”

“I had no mercy for one as insolent as him. There’s a limit to ignorance, and he insulted you rather dearly.” *Ahh... So that last roar must have been some serious badmouthing...* Luli definitely had a calm and collected façade, but she was definitely fiery when she wanted to be. I kind of saw that regularly in her arguments with Kohaku, anyway.

I was glad she was angry for me, but... She completely wrecked that animal. I felt kind of bad for it.

There was no point worrying about it, though. He was burning up the village, so I guess he had it coming to him.

“Let’s just head to the island for now. If we can talk to an Ancient or Elder Dragon, maybe we can find someone who will listen to reason.”

“Indeed, I hope so. Let us hope this child was just an outlier.” I hopped on to Luli’s back with Kohaku and the Etoiles, and we made off for the island.

After a while, a small landmass came into view. It must have been Drakliff island.

There are a lot of Dragons flying over there... Oh, they're coming this way... I heard a lot of roaring, and we quickly found ourselves surrounded.

"This doesn't exactly feel all that friendly..."

"They've come out to intimidate us. They're all young ones, seemingly friends of the copper."

"Tell them I'd like to talk to whoever rules their island."

"Very well." Luli turned to the surrounding Dragons and let out a shriek, which elicited a series of roars from them. *Oh geez... They're so loud.*

"They're saying there's no reason for us to meet with the elder, they're suspicious of strangers."

"...They really can't hold a simple conversation, huh?" Luli was a creature that reigned as the apex of the Dragon race, but apparently, her lack of manifestation in this world for such a long time had caused their knowledge of her to wane. It made sense that she wouldn't have come here much, though. There wasn't much magic, so who would have been able to summon her?

The Elder would probably know about her, but these ignorant young ones were holding us back for the time being. It was kind of annoying.

"What should we do?"

"For now, fly straight toward the island. We'll break through and meet the elder by force."

"Understood." Luli started flying, prompting the surrounding Dragons to pelt blasts of fire, ice, and lightning at us. I used **[Absorb]** to nullify each and every volley they sent.

We landed on the island, but found ourselves met with several tyrannosaur-like Dragons. They were Earth Dragons, a species that didn't have wings.

"Stay your hands, wastrels!" Kohaku leaped down from Luli's back and transformed into her Heavenly Beast form. Her impact with the ground generated a massive shockwave, immobilizing the incoming enemies.

"Target Lock! **[Gravity]!**" I used my smartphone to cast my spell on all the surrounding Earth Dragons at once.

"Gyraauuugh?!" The collapsed Dragons started screaming out in confusion. I hadn't added enough weight to kill them. I'd just put them in time-out for a while.

As I took care of the Earth Dragons, a large one swooped down in front of Luli. Its green body, all the way from the neck below, was covered in sharp spines. *I remember reading about this one in the guild's bestiary... It's a Spike Dragon.*

It was massive. Far more massive than Luli.

"Groaaaaaaar!"

"Gwauuuuuugh!" The Spike Dragon roared, prompting Luli to roar back. My ears were killing me.

It began to inhale, it was preparing to breathe out an attack. Luli met its challenge and began to inhale as well.

The two of them shot off their searing breath attacks at the same time. Both torrents of flame met in the middle, mingling and pushing against the other until Luli's breath won out. The massive Spike Dragon was roasted alive, falling down on the spot.

Puffs of smoke floated into the air above its chargrilled corpse.

"Was that the Elder?"

“No, this one’s even younger than the one I torched earlier. It was badmouthing us quite horribly.” *That one was young? But it was huge! I guess size isn’t an indicator of age when it comes to this species.*

Hm? Another Dragon came down toward us from the mountain in the middle of the island. The other Dragons, which were screaming in the sky, suddenly fell silent as it came near.

“Ohh...?” I set my eyes on the Dragon that had come out to see us, and involuntarily let out an amazed sound. This was clearly an Elder Dragon... But it might’ve even been an Ancient one.

The silver creature soared through the air with elegance and poise, before gently settling to the ground near us.

“I cannot contain my joy... For the grand Azure Monarch to appear before us... To what do we owe such an honor?” The Silver Dragon spoke in eloquent human tones as it bowed its head. The other Dragons suddenly followed its examples, landing in the area and bowing their bodies down.

“I am not the Azure Monarch here, my child. You may call me Luli. For that name was granted to me by my master, Mochizuki Touya.” The Silver Dragon opened its eyes in shock for a moment before turning to me and bowing its head.

“I beg your pardon for the foolish children of this island...”

“So you should, cur! Do you not know how to discipline...?!” I put my hands over Kohaku’s mouth before she ruined everything. I didn’t want her ruining a delicate situation.

“It’s okay, don’t mind it. Are you the Dragon that rules this place?”

“I am. I rule this place, and this incident was my mistake. Please forgive me for being unable to stop the pitiful children...”

... You know, this guy doesn't look so good. He seems kind of low on energy... Was it because of Kohaku's anger, maybe? No, actually... He was flying slow just before as well... Is there something wrong with him? Maybe that's why he hasn't been able to unify the Dragons here.

I squinted and noticed something peculiar about the Silver Dragon's tail. There was purple discoloration toward the tip. I looked a little closer and noticed purple splotches all over its tail.

"What's wrong with your tail, exactly?"

"...I am rather ashamed to say it, but around two-hundred years ago, a human and a mechanical doll inflicted this wound upon me. It remains as a curse that eats at me even now. I had considered biting off my tail, but I would rather live in lethargy and pain than forgo my ability to fly." The Silver Dragon looked down in shame. *Forgo your ability to fly? Huh?*

"Do Dragons need their tails to fly?"

"Not quite... We rely on the tail to balance ourselves during flight. There are indeed Dragons that cannot fly, such as Earth Dragons... But Earth Dragon physiology grants them incredible leg strength. Airborne species lack that kind of power... Thus if he removed his tail, he would be unable to fly, and unable to truly thrive on the ground. He wouldn't be a creature you could call a Dragon at all." Luli explained the situation to me.

Geez... Who would do something like that to the Dragon...? I guess by mechanical doll he's referring to a Golem, but I wonder what kind of Golem could maim a Dragon like this.

"That Golem... Er... That mechanical doll... What color was it?"

"As I recall... It was purple... Why?"

Purple... It must have been Fanatic Viola... Given that it was two-hundred years ago, it was probably serving a different master than Luna, though.

Wait, I shouldn't jump to conclusions. There's no way Viola is the only purple Gollem in the world. It doesn't mean that a crown did this.

"I'll heal you. Hold still, please."

"Oh?" I walked around to the tail and examined the injury. It was probably a deep poison. I judged that this kind of thing would kill a human in a matter of minutes, but the Dragon's body had allowed him to withstand it for over two-hundred years. Removing the poison was the first step.

"[**Recovery**]." I let the magic from my hand into the silver tail, and the tender purple splotches began to clear up. His beautiful scales began to regain their silver sheen.

"**Come forth, Light! Calm of the Goddess: [Mega Heal]!**" I then finished it off by healing any damage the poison had done to his tail.

"Ooh... My body...! How very refreshing... I feel young again!" The Silver Dragon roared into the sky, prompting all the other Dragons on the island to roar along with him.

I'd heard a dog howl before, but Dragons were on a completely different level. A bunch of Dragons roaring at the same time made the very air quiver.

"Ghhh...!"

«They are singing your praises, my liege. Please forgive them for that.» Luli's telepathy prevented me from grumbling too hard. If they were being polite, then I'd be polite in turn.

I listened to the Dragons and their noisy howling for a while longer, until they finally stopped. The Silver Dragon turned to me and bowed his head deeply.

“Lord Mochizuki Touya... I can truly never repay the debt you have given me this day. Even so, is there anything we can do for you?”

“Actually, yes. You don’t need to worry about grand gestures, but I would like to ask a small favor. Could you grant me some territory on this island? I would like to build a home here.”

“Something so paltry is no request at all. You may have some space on the mountainside, it has a magnificent overlook that surveys the entire island.” That sounded great to me. I nodded and asked him to guide me there.

Unlike the slow elegance it had displayed before, the Silver Dragon now flapped its wings at full force and rocketed into the air. We followed after him on Luli’s back, until we reached the area on the side of the mountain.

When we got there, the Silver Dragon wrapped himself in a dazzling light, seemingly changing shape. Once the light settled, he had transformed into a humanoid form. He resembled a young man with long, flowing silver hair that reached his waist.

He had horns sprouting from his head, and rough scale patches on his limbs, he resembled Sonia’s people. He wore a plain pair of pants and a simplistic jacket. Frankly, he was handsome. I wasn’t jealous or anything, but he looked really good.

“Huh... You can turn into a human?”

“Indeed. We Silver Dragons have an affinity for the human form and species, and that affinity has manifested in this trait.”

“Can you do that, Luli?”

“I see no reason to. Silver Dragons are strange creatures, if you ask me.” Luli shook her head as she transformed into her mini-form again. Given that she could change into that form, she could probably turn into a human if she wanted. It was probably more a case of wouldn’t rather than couldn’t.

Luli and the other Heavenly Beasts seemed proud of their regular forms, so there’d be no need for them to turn humanoid.

I walked toward the cliff edge. The view of the island was great.

“This is pretty good. I really like the view...”

“Ping.” Ruby started imitating me, looking around the area. Saph and Emerl started to imitate her in turn. I wondered if they liked it.

“Guess I should prepare the area, then...” I flattened out the sloping parts and created a solid foundation of land with Earth magic. This was an outcropping on a mountainside, after all. I didn’t want to risk a landslide.

After I made a sturdy enough foundation, I opened up **[Storage]** and pulled a house out of it.

“Wow...”

“Ping...” “Pong...” “Pang...” The Silver Dragon looked on in surprise, along with Ruby and her sisters. I guess the sudden action took them by surprise.

I’d purchased this home a while ago. It belonged to a noble from Regulus, but I managed to get him to part with it for a pretty good price.

I placed the home down and dug it deep into the firm foundation by using **[Modeling]**. The garden looked a little mediocre for the time being, but I figured I could save the flower-planting for later.

“Would it be alright if other humans come to this house from time to time through teleportation magic? We won’t bother the other Dragons on the island, I promise.”

“Not a problem. I will ensure that the other Dragons keep away from this place.” Even though I had the elder’s promise, I still erected a defensive barrier just in case. I felt there may still be some foolhardy Dragons around.

I pulled the Dimensional Disruptor Mk. II out of **[Storage]** and plopped it down into the middle of the garden. Originally I was going to put it in a basement area, but this place wasn’t inhabited by humans so having it next to the house would be fine.

Wait... There aren’t any people on this island. Why’d I bother setting up a house?! I could’ve just plonked the portal down and called it a day. Well, whatever. I guess it’s nice to have another vacation home.

All that was left was to entrust the house to Ruby and her sisters... But I had my doubts they were ready. Plus I needed to take them to Doctor Babylon for a tune-up.

“It’d be convenient if I could just bring Laim to live here...” Our super-charged butler would be able to manage this place, but I was sure him suddenly vanishing from the world he was born into would raise some questions.

“To be honest, the Silver Dragon can probably tend to this place for you. Silver Dragons are rare and unusual in that they have an active interest in humans and human culture.”

“Oh yeah?”

“Indeed. Now and then I transform into a human so that I might enter their towns and learn more about their ways.” The Silver Dragon nodded his head slowly. It seemed he was as curious as he was mighty. I wondered if his species had gained the ability to

transform into humans due to this burning curiosity ingrained into them. I wondered if he was attacked by the Gollem while he was wandering around as a human...

"Then... Will you do this for me? You can use the home as if it were your own, and I'll give you money to arrange food and furniture, however you like it."

"That sounds wonderful. I adore human culture, and always wanted to try living in a human home, so this works well for me." I pulled out a bag containing my remaining coins. I asked that he use the money to keep the house in order and buy whatever kind of furniture he wanted. I also gave him a magic carpet, since I didn't want him drawing too much attention during his shopping runs.

"Oh, that's right... You're a Silver Dragon, but I didn't catch your name. What is it?"

"Ah, forgive me. I don't actually have a name. If it is alright with you, I would happily take a name from the one who granted a name to Lady Luli..."

Silver Dragon, huh... Hmm... Well, Yumina already named her wolf Silver, so I guess I can't use that...

I didn't think a Dragon would appreciate being named the same thing as a wolf.

"I'll call you Shirogane, then... That's a name that means silver in my mother tongue. I also used the name for a brief while when I was disguised."

"Thank you for your blessing...! Thank you so much... From here on I am Shirogane." The Silver Dragon, Shirogane, bowed to me. I was more than fine giving him the name I once wore when I was the masked Oni.

Alright, guess that means my business in this world is concluded for now.

“Alright, we’ll be heading back for now. Next time I come, I’ll bring my friends with me... So please look forward to it.”

“Of course. Until next time, my friend.” Shirogane smiled wide and bowed his head. He was definitely moving a lot more smoothly. Part of me wondered if this was really the same Dragon we’d seen earlier.

I activated the Dimensional Disruptor Mk. II by pouring my magic into it. I made a mental note to install a magical reserve tank on this side later on.

The meter filled up a lot faster than the one on Palerius island.

Luli, Kohaku, and the Etoiles didn’t exceed the weight limit, so they were good to come through with me.

We headed through the portal and safely came out into Babylon’s Garden.

“Oooh! So these must be the Gollems I’ve heard so much about! I see, interesting! How amazing!” I brought all three of the Etoiles to the research laboratory, where Doctor Babylon immediately began to fawn over them with a wild grin.

“Ohoho... Oh yes... They’re all the same model? Female? Mmhm... I can’t wait to check them out. Hey, sisters... Don’t worry about a thing, okay? I’m gonna spread you open and dig around your insides, aaha! Ow...!”

“Knock it off. No sexual harassment cases, please.” I karate-chopped Doc Babylon on the head. The three Gollems honestly looked a little nervous.

“That hurt...! Come now, it was just my innocent curiosity running wild. It’s my job here to be interested in unusual technology, isn’t it?!”

"I understand that, but these Gollems have a learning system. I can't afford to have you teaching them weird stuff during their development." I warned the annoying little pervert. I didn't want Ruby and the others turning out like her. I definitely needed a more proper individual for their education.

"Mm... Goodness... Ahh... Given their sizes, they'd really suit cute clothing... P-Panties, too! Aahaha! D-Doctor, can you m-make their bodies more squishy, too?!" Tica, the one in control of the research laboratory, started to breathe heavily as she surveyed the Golem trio. *What the hell are you doing here, you wannabe diddler? Keep your dirty eyes off them!* To be honest, the Babylon sisters were pretty similar to Gollems if we lumped artificial lifeforms all together.

Well... No point keeping them active while this is happening. I sent the three Gollems into a dormant state, halting their functions for a while.

I told them the basics that I'd learned from Nia, and informed them that they must never touch the G-Cube or the Q-Crystal.

"[Analyze]." She'd definitely be able to understand more than I'd picked up.

"Hm... Interesting... There are components here that I've never heard of. Some of these raw materials may not exist in this world, but I can substitute them. As for the abilities these three house... I have no idea, I can't figure that part out."

"The other world has a line of Gollems called the crowns that are capable of performing incredible feats. There's a small chance that it was a crown that came to this world so long ago and made contact with old man Palerius."

"An interesting hypothesis, but I don't fully buy into it yet. If we are to assume that the Golem repaired the boundary, then what happened to it afterward? Is it still in this world?" That wasn't

impossible... But I'd done a search for Gollems via my map and nothing came up. It probably went back to the Reverse World, if there even was one to begin with.

Its ability might have been similar to how Ende could travel between worlds.

"Well, no matter. I'll thoroughly analyze these three. I'll probably learn something valuable in due time."

"Gotcha. Seriously, though... Don't go overboard, alright? And don't modify them with any weird extra parts." I made sure the two knew I didn't want any funny business and moved to leave the research laboratory.

Oh damn, I didn't get to pick up any souvenirs over there... Everything ended up happening so fast that I just wanted to come home...

I shrugged my shoulders and opened up a **[Gate]** to my room in Brunhild castle.

Chapter IV: Everyday Life

A few days had passed since my voyage into the Reverse World, and we were holding a meeting of nations.

Though it had such a fancy title, it was more of a gathering for us to eat, make merry, and build personal relations. It was really more like a house party than a political arrangement. I kind of wondered how I'd managed to cultivate that kind of atmosphere, but I didn't mind it too much. So long as the world leaders were getting along, I was satisfied.

We'd decided that Xenoahs, Palouf, and Felsen would be joining the alliance. We also agreed to change the alliance's name to the League of Nations.

Xenoahs would be represented by the overlord, Zelgadi von Xenoahs.

Palouf would be represented by its king, Ernest Din Palouf.

Felsen would also be represented by its king, Boulanger Frost Felsen.

These three kings would be participating in the next meeting.

Elfrau, Hannock, and Ryle were up next for consideration. After they were done with, I wanted to push for Eashen and Palerius to join us as well. I was going to head over to Palerius the following day, so I'd try to broach the idea then.

"Whooooa... I-It's shaking so much!"

"C'mon Ernie, get up!"

"Ahaha! Got you! Please don't think poorly of me, King Palouf!"

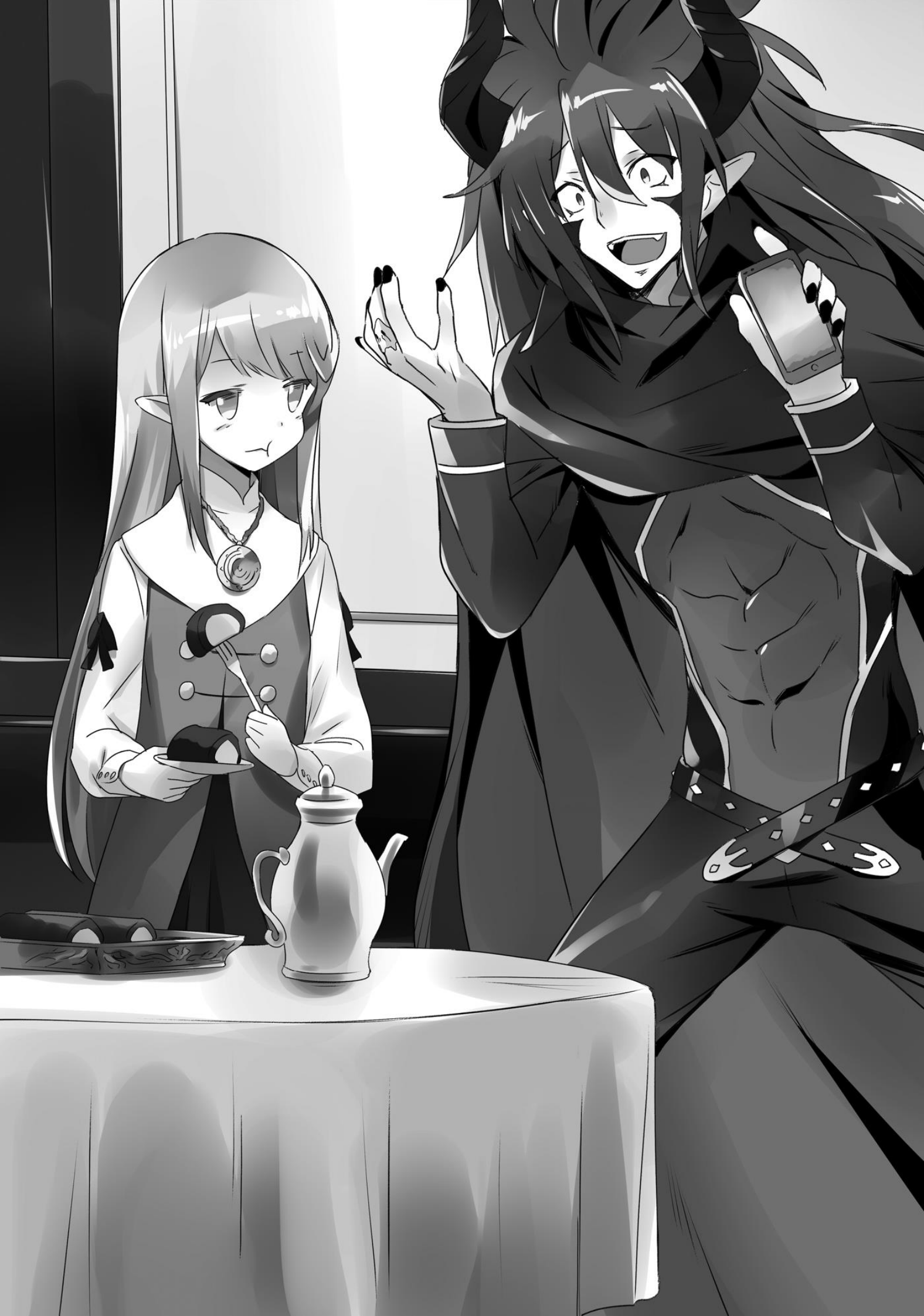
Three Frame Gears were projected on a screen in our game room.

The king of Felsen, the king of Palouf, and his fiancée Rachael were playing in the Frame Units. The place kind of felt like an arcade.

Everyone else was scattered around the room in various groups. Nothing formal seemed to be happening.

Princess Ellicia, fiancée to King Felsen, was busy talking to the emperor of Regulus. He was her father, after all. Lu seemed to have joined in on their conversation as well. The overlord was showing off his new smartphone to his daughter and was desperately attempting to obtain her phone number... He wasn't even trying to hide the fact that he was begging.

Pay attention to your surroundings, Overlord... Sirius is giving you a look... Why'd you even bring him here as your guard if you were just gonna fawn all over Sakura? Bah... Well, I guess she'll probably fold and give you her number eventually. Maybe.



I looked over at a nearby table to find the doge of Roadmare talking to the knight king about some kind of matter. King Cloud of Lihnea and Princess Lucienne were enjoying each other's company on the balcony outside.

My sisters, specifically the god of love and the god of hunting, smiled over at the happy couple while the pope stood nearby.

"Things are going pretty well, huh..."

"Quite. Just a few years ago this kind of atmosphere was unthinkable... Ah, that's riichi." The king of Mismede and the king of Belfast were playing mahjong with me and the emperor of Refreese, enjoying a leisurely chat.

"International disputes have been solved, for the most part. I can't help but admit that I've been looking forward to our meetings more with each passing one." The emperor of Refreese nodded along.

Hmm... It's my turn... I drew a new tile. Ohh... A Green Dragon! Now I just need to discard, but... Ack, this is tense... I'm toeing victory and defeat... I made my move.

"Ron. That's riichi. Got an identical set. Read them and weep, that's haneman."

Hngh! My face fell as the king of Belfast let loose a crushing blow.

"Oof. Seems I was saved by your move, Touya." The king of Mismede turned toward me with a grin. *Damn it! How the hell did you guys already manage to outclass me in both mahjong and shogi?!* Thus I was the overall loser of the game. It sucked.

"Hey there, Grand Duke! I must say this is rather fun."

"Well at least someone's enjoying themselves..." The king of Felsen walked over toward me, having finished playing around in the Frame Unit. He'd won against a literal child... He probably should've learned to read the air a little.

“Ah, Grand Duke... About what we discussed earlier.”

“Oh, right. Yeah, there’s no mistake. It’s the same as ours.”

“Hmm? What are you two talking about?” The three kings seated with me took an interest in what I was discussing with the king of Felsen. I decided to explain.

“I received a message from the king of Felsen a little bit ago. It turns out that explorers in his country found some ancient artifacts underground. Well... Lemme show you.” I brought out my smartphone and displayed the pictures that the king of Felsen had sent me. It was a large object in an underground ruin. It was rather large compared to the knight standing next to it in the picture.

“Ohh... This is the same kind of thing that Sue uses on her Frame Gear...”

“That’s right. It’s a magic train. It’s a vehicle from the ancient civilization that can be used to ride around a rail at high speeds.” I nodded to the king of Belfast, who’d noticed the similarities to the vehicles that came with his niece’s Frame Gear.

It wasn’t exactly the same as Sue’s Laevateinn, though. Her train didn’t require rails to run.

“Rails, you say? Like the thing you had under the trolley cart?”

“Ah, that was fun! Yes, I recall that...!” The beastking laughed along with the emperor of Refreese. *That thing went a little fast...*

“Here... I made this miniature model as a demonstration....” I activated **[Storage]** and pulled out a small, eighty-centimeter track, and a miniature train toy.

I set it all up and put the model on the rail.

“Pour some magic into the little model, and see what happens.”

“Like this...? Oh!” The king of Belfast put a bit of magic into the train, and it began to slowly move along the rail on its own.

“The idea is that it’s a magical vehicle that takes magic power and changes it into dynamic energy. The model can move with a little bit of magic, but the larger one would require a lot more. The one they unearthed in Felsen can take in a lot of different people’s magic through different spellstones and run that way.”

“Yes, the pictures seem explanatory... Our magitechnicians have said much the same thing, too.” The king of Felsen nodded in admiration as he watched the little toy move around the track.

According to Doctor Babylon, the train in the photograph was one from Partheno. Felsen’s current territory was part of Partheno’s old territory, so I wasn’t too surprised they’d made a discovery like that. I wondered if the ruins they unearthed were a subway station or something.

It could’ve been a situation where what was once a metro station was now a dungeon...

“So, does that magical train move?”

“No, it doesn’t... That’s why I asked the advice of the grand duke, here.” The king of Felsen responded to the beastking’s inquiry. Felsen was a kingdom renowned for its magitechnology, and its scientific advancements. But not even they could get the ancient train to start working again.

I wondered if the researchers over there had given up. Doctor Babylon had come up with an answer, either way.

“In conclusion, we need something similar to what the Frame Gears use. It needs a medium to transmit the magic power. It can’t just move on magic alone.” Something similar to the Ether Liquid we used in Brunhild was necessary. The lesser vehicles would move even with impure Ether Liquid, so that wasn’t a big deal. Still, Ether Liquid

was like the blood that pumped through the body of a machine. It needed clear circulation. After enough time, it would deteriorate in quality and become completely useless.

“I can make it move again, would you want to hand it over to Brunhild?”

“I was wondering, actually... We could pay you... I think I’d rather learn how to reactivate and produce more magic trains in Felsen.” I wondered if it would be fine to just leave it to Felsen. Making stuff up in Babylon took up a lot of time and resources, after all.

We did recently create a mana battery that helped circulate ether liquid... It was coated with Phrasium, too. I decided to just sell it to them and let them handle the production. I was sure the magitechnicians of Felsen would be able to handle it.

“Can we make them in Felsen, then?”

“I think you should be able to manage it. But you can buy the central systems from us, alright?”

“Hoho... You’re getting rather shrewd, Touya.” The emperor of Refreese grinned. I didn’t mind, making money was fine. Besides, there was no need to teach outsiders about Ether Liquid or the mana batteries. Just selling them the equipment pre-assembled was fine.

“Could we buy one of these trains from you, King Felsen?”

“Hmm... Well, I need to be sure we can actually start producing them, first. I’ll buy some of this stuff from the grand duke for reference, first.”

“If King Belfast’s in, then Refreese wants one, too!” Two magic trains had already been pre-ordered, apparently. Felsen could probably stand to make a decent profit from them. Mismede and Refreese would probably want in on it later.

I set aside the mahjong tiles and spread a basic map out on the table.

“First off, we’d want to connect Belfast and Refreese by rail. Then we’d want to extend that to Mismede if we can, and then to Regulus. We’d need a more formal discussion between all relevant parties, though. But yeah, I hope it works out.” If we had a few dozen mages that could handle Earth magic, it would probably be simple enough. Railroads were simple to construct, but they had problems that came with them. We’d need to make sure that public awareness of the railroads was made, so people didn’t sleep on the tracks or damage them. In a small country, it wouldn’t take long for word to spread, but in a larger nation like Belfast or Regulus, it would take some time.

“Hmm... We’ll need to bring along some engineers from Felsen to teach us more...”

“Or maybe we could send some of our engineers to study abroad.” The king of Belfast and the emperor of Refreese started to chat about their future plans.

The beastking, on the other hand, turned to me while gazing at the map.

“But what of Mismede? The Great Gau river separates us from Belfast... It’s not like we can just build a bridge or anything...” The beastking not-so-subtly stared at me.

“...I’ll build a bridge.”

“Come now... Don’t think too badly of me. I didn’t mean to pressure you.” *Really? Cause it sounds like you did...*

“Ah, Touya... This model train... I was wondering if I could take it back for Yamato...”

“Oh, sure you can. Gimme a minute... I’ll get him the other rail parts, too.” I opened up **[Storage]** and handed over some corner rails, S-sections, and other rail types to the king of Belfast.

I wasn't too surprised by this kind of request. Yamato seemed to enjoy toys, and I hoped he'd like this one too.

It wasn't much cost to me, so it was fine. I didn't mind giving something like that to my future brother-in-law.

The model train had been made out of a small spellstone with a few basic commands inscribed into it, so it wouldn't be hard to mass-produce it with Olba's help. It'd probably end up being entertaining for kids or collectors. I decided to keep that in mind for later.



I was paying a visit to Palerius Island, in order to check on them after they'd made their country more open.

"So you've seen an overall decrease in Behemoth attacks?"

"For the most part, yes. They've been sighted a lot less in general, and we're beginning a slow expansion of our residential areas." I was speaking with Mentor Central in the central temple on the island. She'd certainly been busy with a lot, lately.

"Palouf and Elfrau have been purchasing raw Behemoth materials from us, so we've begun to import goods using funds accumulated from those trade deals. We've also been making steps toward building a port near the southern city."

"Interesting. That makes sense, since there aren't any proper places for ships to make landfall right now." The island had been completely isolated until recently, of course. They had no need for ships until now. Even the trade vessels from Palouf had been anchoring themselves offshore and rowing in on smaller boats. That's why a proper port was definitely needed.

The fruits and other crops found on Palerius were selling for a high price, since they weren't located anywhere else on the continent.

The craftsmen on the island were also finding major success selling trinkets.

Handicraft stuff was usually associated with the dwarves who lived in the Kingdom of Ryle. For the Paloufeans, buying such handicrafts from Palerius was much easier due to the closer proximity.

“I was certainly afraid for what might become of my people once the barrier came down, but it seemed I needn’t have worried at all. Our life of fear has finally come to an end, and now that we can expand our residencies it seems like the island is on its way to a new age of prosperity. We are in your debt, Grand Duke... Truly, we are.”

“Don’t worry about it. We managed to take advantage of the situation here to get good combat training against the Behemoths, so it worked well for our Frame Gears too. In my eyes, there’s no debt to be paid.” We smiled at one another and continued to talk here and there about lesser political issues.

Once I got back from Palerius island, I decided to give Relisha a call.

I’d gotten permission from Mentor Central to establish a guild branch on Palerius Island, so thankfully we’d be able to set up anti-Phrase defenses for them.

Even putting the Phrase aside, Palerius island still had a lot of mana wellsprings dotted around it, which caused several strong monsters to appear. Even if they didn’t become Behemoths, there were still a lot of oversized monsters out there.

Veteran adventurers and hunters would probably consider the place a goldmine for the job, so they’d probably flock there like they’d been flocking to the Brunhild Dungeon Islands. From there, the problem would begin to sort itself out.

I ended the call and began to wander around the streets of Brunhild. I didn’t really have much in the way of plans for the day.

The main street was crowded as ever. Olba Strand's store had a lot of capsule toy machines lined up in front of it, and I heard them clunk and click as a group of children tried their luck.

I found myself chuckling at the sight, since the kids gathering around made the store seem a little cheaper than it actually was. I wondered about setting up a small candy store... Maybe that'd be more of a suitable place for the capsule machines.

Olba's store, the Strand Company, had three shops in Brunhild. It was basically a hobby and toy shop rolled into one. They sold hula hoops, spinning tops, and other items like that.

It was all for decent prices that even little kids could afford, though there were things adults could buy as well.

"Touya?" My thoughts were interrupted by a voice, so I turned and found Hilde. She was clad in her knightly armor and wearing a Phrasium blade at her waist. Her gauntlets were hanging around her waist next to the sword, as well.

"Hm? What're you doing out here?"

"Yae, Elze and I were on the dungeon island earlier. We just got back. They went down to the port to buy some fish, so we ended up parting ways... Now I'm here." *Oh, they went down there? I guess half a day isn't enough to reach the bottom, though...*

The girls went to the Brunhild dungeons now and then to patrol the upper floors for danger. It was safe for the most part, but many unexpected things could happen in a place like that... That's why I wanted them to stay on guard. Personally, I didn't like them going out there so much.

"Why didn't you go with the others?"

"I'm not so good at handling raw fish..." Hilde muttered. *Huh... I see.*

The three of them were good friends, but they had different tastes in food. Yae and Elze were more than happy to chow down on regular, everyday dishes that anyone would cook at home. Hilde, on the other hand, ate more sophisticated dishes.

That was just a byproduct of how she was raised, and it was just one of those things. That didn't mean that Hilde wouldn't eat with us, but often she'd have something alternative to Sashimi when it was on the menu.

She did enjoy octopus and squid, though. Elze and Linze also enjoyed that, since it was a delicacy of Refreeze. The twins definitely enjoyed the same foods.

"Wanna go back with me, then?"

"Yes!" Hilde smiled and walked up to me, gently leaning into my left side.

I noticed her moving her hand a little and opening her mouth as if she was wanting to say something. *Hmm? Oh... I see...*

"Do you want to hold my hand?"

"A-Ah no... I-I just got back, so my hands are all dirty and s-sweat-eeeek!" She started blushing and mumbling excuses, so I just grabbed her right hand with my left and interlocked our fingers. Immediately Hilde began to quietly babble, and her face turned a deeper shade of crimson.

"I don't mind doing things like this, you know. You're a lot more reserved than the others, Hilde... You can be a little more selfish now and then, don't worry."

"A-Ah, yes... Thank you. I-It's just how I was raised... In the knight order, we are taught that discipline is vital..."

"You don't need to worry about that with me. Right now you're not Hilde the knight. You're Hilde, my fiancée. We're a man and a woman."

"...Y-Yes." Her face reddened again, and she looked down. According to her brother, Hilde had been disciplined in the ways of the sword from a young age. She followed the traditions of Lestia to the letter and had a lot of rigid rules ingrained in her.

She upheld values that included protecting the weak, being a shield for the people, and keeping a virtuous mind.

She never really got to live like an ordinary girl. Honestly, I felt a little sorry for her, but I didn't want to treat her any differently.

Karen said that I was Hilde's first love, which probably meant a great deal to her.

We had a casual chat as we walked back to the castle together. Ordinarily, I would've just used **[Gate]**, but the quality time was nice.

"...Uhm, actually... There's something I wanted to ask you, Touya."

"Hm? What's that?"

"That... Well... Ah... Do you... Do you love me, Touya?" I froze on the spot. Hilde stopped along with me, looking up at me with a heartbreakingly sad look on her face. She suddenly forced a smile and began waving her arms.

"A-Ah, please forget it... I said something weird!"

"...What made you ask that?"

"I-I know I'm not as girly as the others... I know little other than the sword, and even our engagement was a result of what happened in Lestia... I sometimes fear that you don't view me with the same affection that you do the others..." She nervously sputtered out her feelings.

Man... You know, it's a little late for me to be realizing this... But I need to be more proactive with my fiancées. I've had enough of being stupid, it's time they know exactly how I feel.

I stood in front of Hilde and grasped her tightly. It was through my own stupidity that she came to worry this much, so I decided to make my feelings properly known.

"Like I said, you aren't a princess knight to me. I don't want the Lestian Princess. I want you. I want your happiness, I want to keep you safe, and I want to look after you. I love you, and that's no lie."

"Ah..."

"I love you, Hilde. I truly, madly do. Please don't ever doubt it."

"O-Okay... I... I-I'm sorry..." Hilde began to snifle, so I pulled her into a tight hug.

Damn, I'm the worst. How could I make someone this precious cry like this? I can't afford to keep up this nonsense...



“Ohoho, you know? Here’s your chance! Go for the smooch!”

“Eek!”

“Gah!” Karen’s voice suddenly rang out of nowhere. I looked over my shoulder and sighed. *Quit popping up out of nowhere!*

“Don’t startle us like that. What are you doing here?”

“My Flirty Touya Radar went off! I couldn’t miss something as important as this!” *Your what radar...? Knock it off... If you need to watch, then watch from afar. God of love or not, learn to read a goddamn atmosphere.*

“U-Uhm, Touya... Y-You’re hurting me... A little...”

“Huh? Ah, sorry!” I’d been hugging Hilde a little too tight, so I pulled back.

“It’s okay... I didn’t dislike it...” Hilde nodded slightly, her cheeks flushed. I felt my own cheeks reddening a bit, too... Though I wasn’t sure why.

“Ahaha, how very steamy, you know? You two better make the most of lovey-dovey moments like this while you can!”

“The hell’s that supposed to mean?” I felt like she was mocking me, somehow. Almost as if she was implying that my love would fade, or something.

“Love and affection are distinct, you know? Love just happens for no particular reason, while affection needs to be nurtured. Both are wonderful, but they’re quite different, you know?” *Hrmph... I get it, but I don’t feel all that convinced if you’re the one who’s saying it.*

“Well, you needn’t worry about it right now. You’ll know about it more when you’re older, you know?”

“Tsk.” *Guess I’m still a kid, huh... Bah, even grumbling is childish...*

“Hm? Is that Touya? What’s up?”

I turned to see Elze and Yae coming up the hill. They were carting along a couple of buckets of raw fish. They must've been returning from the port.

"Ah, Hilde-dono is here as well, she is. Wait... You are crying, you are..."

"Wh... Touya! What'd you do to her?!" The two of them noticed Hilde's damp eyes and began laying the third degree on me. The three of them were very close, so it's not like I didn't understand why they were concerned.

"I-I didn't do anything! Right, Hilde?"

"H-He's right. There's nothing for you to worry about." Hilde gave a half-hearted explanation to the two girls. But that just made them even more suspicious.

I didn't really do anything wrong. It was true that I'd made her cry, but I'd done my best to reassure her. I was a little embarrassed, all the same.

"I'm not so sure I buy it."

"This is odd, it is..."

"Hilde isn't lying, you know? Up until now she and Touya were in the throes of lovey-dovey passion! Lots of hot feelings flying around... You know?"

"H-Hey, sis! Don't say crap like that!" Karen merely giggled before throwing me a wink. *What did you do?! Were you planning for this?!*

"Grab him!"

"I will, I will!" Yae and Elze grabbed me roughly by the arms and began dragging me toward the castle. *Ow! Oh god! I'm pretty sure arms aren't meant to bend like that!*

"U-Uhm, Karen...? Touya's in pain..."

“He sure is, you know? Touya needs to nurture affection with all his fiancées equally, after all. You’ve had some, so let’s watch as he nurtures some with these two. That’s love, you know?”

“Y-Yes! You’re right!” Don’t let her trick you, Hilde! She’s just having sadistic fun! Look at her smirking! She’s smirking!!

“We want to hear exactly what happened, we do.”

“Yeah, you better tell everyone about it. Though I guess if we ask Hilde, she’d just tell us... We made a promise not to keep any secrets, after all!”

You did? I didn’t hear about any promises like that... That means everyone’ll know exactly what I’ve done! That’s not necessarily a bad thing, but... Guh... I suddenly feel impotent...

In the end, a man was powerless before a good woman that loved him.

Thus, a man can only endure.

That night, I was forced to confess my feelings to each of my fiancées. I was so embarrassed by the confessions that when I got back to my room that night I started screaming into my pillow and rolling around.

Oh... Gaaah! Kohaku and the others were watching! This sucks! This is awful! Leen was recording it on her smartphone, too! Auugh... They made me say all that stuff... I even had to say it to Sue... Oh gggaaaaah!!! It’s not like they weren’t true, but being made to just say them like that?! I wanna die!

Remembering it made me scream into my pillow even louder.
...Gaaaaaaah!! And thus, I tossed and turned in anguish, long into the night.



“...What’s up, Renne?” I happened to see our little maid in the corridor, so I called out to her.

She was carrying a lot of books above her head, so I was curious. She turned around to greet me back.

“Oh! Oi, bru- Uhh... Brunhild... Duke! Grand Duke! Good morning to y— Aaaah!” A clattering sound accompanied several falling books. Given that she’d greeted me by bowing her head, that was inevitable.

“Ahh... I messed up...” She grumbled as she picked up all the books.

“What are all these books for?”

“I’m doing uhm... Some special preparation for the Maid’s Guild.”

“It’s only us two, you know... You can speak a little more casually. What’re you doing with the Maid’s Guild, anyway?” Renne was a street urchin in Belfast until I plucked her from the streets and hired her as an apprentice maid. We later found out that she actually had noble Regulus blood in her, but she ultimately decided not to go to her dead mother’s household. She wanted to stay here and continue her maid training.

Brunhild was a small nation, but its maids were still expected to be up to standards. Etiquette, situational awareness, and other vital housekeeping skills were a must. Renne was still just an apprentice, so she only attended to our personal needs and assisted the other maids.

She was fully committed, though. Even though she was only nine years old, she worked day and night to study for her Maid Guild exams.

“Cecile was teachin’ me a new skill I could show off in my next exam, she was! Figgered that if I had these books on my head then it’d

increase my balance and posture if I walked proper. Gotta be elegant and proper if I wanna make it...”

“Makes sense. You’re taking this seriously... Don’t overdo it, though. Even if you don’t get the proper qualifications, it’s not like we’ll kick you out or anything.”

“Mhm, I know! I wanna be a first-class maid for the sake of you and Brunhild! Cause I wanna be your head maid!” *Heh, that’s a pretty lofty goal. Lapis is the current head maid, after all. It’ll take a lot to get better than her. Plus she’s pretty talented at fighting.*

“Oh right! Moroha’s been teachin’ me plenty, too! I know all about fighting, now!”

“Is... Is that right...”

Why am I only hearing about this now... I hope she didn’t teach you any weird swordplay techniques... Actually, wait... You should already know how to throw knives thanks to Cecile... And Leen’s been teaching you magic, too... Oh my... Oh no... We might actually be sowing the seeds for an unstoppable maid, after all.

“You’ve been going to school too, right? A first-class maid needs a first-class education.” Renne attended the classes taught by Fiana, Sakura’s mother. Her classes were from nine in the morning until two in the afternoon, after which she came home to help the others.

I kind of had my reservations about working such a little kid so hard, but she’d rejected every offer I’d given her for more time off.

From her perspective, she wasn’t being worked too hard, and she saw it as necessary experience in order for her to reach her goals... So it seemed to be fine.

“Shouldn’t you rest now and then, though?”

“Mhm, I do! I get a good night’s sleep every night! If you ask me, bruv, you’re the one who’s gotta get ‘imself a better rest. Everyone gets plenty worried about you.” I didn’t expect to be told that by

Renne of all people. *Hrmph... Do people really view me as that much of a workaholic? I don't really feel like I've been working hard enough, personally. Poor Kousaka's been handling all the busywork.*

"Well, you've been working so hard, so... I'll get you a present! What would you like?"

"H-Huh? I-Is that alright...?"

"Sure is. Consider it a bonus for trying so hard. What would you like?"

"A... Bonus? Huh?" Ah, damn... I guess the concept of work bonuses don't exist in this world.

"Th-Then... I want one of those things that Sue has, but... Uhm..." Sue...? Oh, she must mean the smartphone. I remember giving one to Lapis and Cecile, but Renne didn't get one.

Hrmm... Should I really be giving a phone to a kid like her? Wait, I already gave one to Sue and they're similarly-aged... Smartphones have handy apps like the notepad, too... The mass-produced ones also have handy dictionaries. You know what? Yeah, she deserves it.

I opened up my **[Storage]** and pulled out one of the white mass-produced smartphone models. I also handed over a little user manual. If she read it through, she'd be able to have a good grasp of how the device worked.

"Th-Thank you so much, bruv!"

"Sure, but here's a word of advice. You can't take it to school. Also, if you lose it or somebody takes it... Tell me right away. I won't get mad, okay?"

"Okay!" Renne happily took the smartphone, and I gave her a pat on the head.

If she brought it to school, that would cause complications. It could get stolen, or she might end up being ostracized for having

something so unusual. Renne was a good kid, so I didn't see her getting bullied... But it was always better to be safe than sorry.

Even if it was a child that ended up causing trouble for Renne, we'd still have to scold them. She was our precious maid, after all.

I registered everyone's numbers into the phone, excluding the numbers for the other world leaders. That meant she'd be able to call me or Sue whenever she liked.

"Good luck with your exams, just don't overdo it, okay?"

"Mhm! Thank you so much! I'll look after it, promise!" She turned and began to trot away, but paused for a moment before putting the books back on her head and beginning a graceful walk.

Oh, crap. I got held up... I need to eat before my meeting! I smiled on at Renne before turning and walking in the opposite direction.

"Hey there, sorry to keep you waiting."

"Ain't a bother at all, milord! I'm thankful fer yer audience." A small group was gathered in the training grounds outside the castle, and their leader smiled before giving me a nod.

He spoke coarsely, and he had a rough, bearded face. His muscles were positively rippling, he was absolutely a prime specimen of his race.

Each member of the group had to have been one and a half meters tall at the very most. They were all men, too... At least I thought so... But I'd heard rumors that even the women of their species were bearded, so it was hard to tell.

They were dwarves. A robust, mountain-dwelling people. A noble race of warrior miners, and craftsmen blacksmiths.

This dwarven group had brought with them a letter from the king of Ryle.

The king of Ryle, Burstra Durga Ryle, was descended from a dwarven bloodline. Apparently, Ryle was largely composed of Dwarven settlements. The delegation before me was a group from one of those hamlets.

“So, what did you want to show me?”

“Ah... It’ll be quicker if we show ya... Here.”

The dwarves had a cart behind them. Whatever was on it was covered by a tarp, but they wanted me to see it. At their leader’s command, the dwarves began to pull the tarp away, exposing the object to the sunlight.

“Oh...!” I recognized the thing under the tarp. It was a short and stout machine with long arms and short legs. It didn’t have anything above the neck area, and the cockpit area on its back was empty.

It looked like one of the Steel Battalion, the knock-off Frame Gears built in Yulong. They’d been used to attempt an invasion of Felsen.

Wait... Is that really one of those? It doesn’t look right... It kind of looks a lot cruder, actually.

It was shaped like a car that had been cut down the middle, with the front half refitted into a torso, and then massive limbs coming out of the side and bottom... It was a rough construction.

Regardless of what it was, it was clearly robotic. And it definitely seemed like one that could be piloted. I’d seen similar Gollems in the Reverse World, but they moved autonomously and just carried people. They weren’t things that could be piloted.

“We call it the Dverg. We’ve been usin’ them fer engineering and ore haulin’. We ain’t really got any plans to sell them or make ’em en masse, though.”

Dverg, huh... In this world, that was the name of the Dwarven ancestor species... I guess that’s a pretty appropriate name.

But man... They made something like this? Those dwarves are something else.

"It's nice, but what are you showing it to me for?"

"You got a giant warrior've yer own, right? I wanted to compare my Dverg here to one've yours."

Huh. Compare, huh? Should I...? I kind of hope they don't get too disheartened...

It was far too late to think about, but looking at the machine in front of me made me realize that their inventor, Bowman, must have actually been a legitimate genius. Still, he was an arrogant fool... Doc Babylon was enough of a moron, anyway... And she had more brains than him.

I popped open a **[Gate]** and called down a Chevalier from the Hangar.

It thudded on the ground, causing shockwaves to rumble out along the ground. The dwarves looked, slack-jawed, as it descended. I'd certainly caught them off-guard.

"This is my mass-produced Frame Gear, the Chevalier. It's the easiest one to handle out of the bunch. Oh, right. This is a slightly outdated model." I couldn't tell whether the dwarves had heard me or not. They were still silently staring, mouths agape, at the Chevalier before them.

I wasn't too surprised, though. Their Dverg was about four meters tall, and my Frame Gear was fifteen meters tall. It was like comparing a little kid with an adult.

"Wh... Did... Didja unearth this machine underground're somethin'?!"

"Only the first few. The others, this one included, were created by my country. There are also a lot of other models we've developed

since then.” *Oh, whoops... I’m speaking a little casually here... I don’t want them to think I’m bragging... But I hope they got what they wanted.*

“...I’ve a request fer ya, Grand Duke. Please introduce me ta whoever made this thing. Now I’ve seen it, I can’t possibly take me fellows back without meetin’ that inventor.”

“Hm? Ah... I mean, I guess so, but...” *I think that’ll just make you guys feel worse...*

“Th-This little lassie is the one what made these?!”

“Pfft, you guys aren’t one for manners, huh? But I guess I’ve heard all dwarves are like that, so it’s fine.” The dwarves were all standing, mouths agape, as they stared at Doctor Babylon.

Their surprise was understandable. From an outside perspective, she looked like a ten-year-old girl.

The leader of the dwarves exhaled softly and began to speak.

“Are you maybe from a race with a longer lifespan than most?”

“Mm... Something like that. Let’s put that aside for a minute, though. Did you invent that thing behind you?” Doc Babylon shoved her hands into her lab coat pockets before gesturing toward the Dverg with her head.

“Hmm... It’s certainly rough around the edges, but I sense a lot of pride in its craftsmanship. It’s far superior to that miserable Frame Gear copy I analyzed a while back. As for the core... You’re using a mana kiln? That’s clever... You’re drawing from the atmosphere and using a magical core in the middle as a catalyst for fuel efficiency...”

“Y-Y’figured that much out jus’ by lookin’?!”

The dwarven leader was taken aback. *Don’t be deceived, she just used her [Analyze] spell covertly.*

“But I don’t think it’s as efficient as it should be. The magic power you’re extracting isn’t being utilized properly. I think each move it makes is expending excess magic power, so you’re operating at a magical loss.”

“Guh... You ain’t wrong... But we’d need higher output to get the magic juices flowin’ through the whole thing. Even if we got leakage, that’s just because we ain’t got a strong enough system yet. Unless y’got an alternative?”

“I do, actually. Engrave the magical conduits into the frame of the machine itself with Ether Lines, and use Adamantite as the base material.”

“Ohh... Of course!” They started an in-depth conversation and left me in the dust.

I thought up a little idea so I whipped out my smartphone and made a call to someone up in Babylon.

“Hey, Rosetta? There’s an interesting conversation going on down here that I’m sure you’d love to be part of. Yup, Doc’s here too.” *I think having her join would be a good idea.*

After a while, the overall-wearing fiend appeared. She suddenly began to rattle off a bunch of improvement ideas for the Dverg.

After a shorter while, the dwarves walked over and began tinkering with the Dverg. I was surprised they weren’t waiting until they got home.

While Rosetta argued with the dwarves about which parts to use, Doctor Babylon came over to me.

“You’ve shown me something interesting, today. As an inventor, I enjoy seeing new concepts from other creators.”

“Isn’t this just the same as the situation with the Steel Battalion, though?”

“That’s a matter of perspective, if you ask me. There’s no doubt that both machines have clearly made use of Frame Gear technology, but the Dverg isn’t entirely derivative. It has original dwarven tech in there too. It’s not just an imitation of the original, so I consider it something new.”

That made sense. They’d built something entirely new based on the Steel Battalion, and what was known about Frame Gears. I didn’t really know much about the dwarves being talented magic engineers, but it made sense. They and the Elves were species that had long lifespans. It wasn’t strange to assume that they’d have inherited some knowledge from the ancient civilization.

I’d actually heard that some of the engineers working on the upcoming magic train in Felsen were dwarves.

“Is this safe, though?”

“Again, that’s a matter of perspective. We can hardly halt progress, nor the rise of technology and civilization. Unless of course, you plan to confiscate this Dverg, murder all these dwarves, and send back their bodies to Ryle as a warning.” Doctor Babylon grinned wide toward me. *Hell no would I ever do something like that!*

“This machine would’ve been invented no matter what. In a sense, they’re late to the party. Since the Frame Gears are already five-thousand years old. It’s simple scientific advancement.”

“I guess so...”

“I suppose it’s more of a revival, though. Right now this Dverg could be destroyed with a single magic blast, and isn’t ready for domestic use.” That was true. It didn’t really seem like much of a weapon, either.

In the future, it could become something similar to a Frame Gear, though.

Compared to the Reverse World and its Gollems, magitech just wasn't on the same level in this world. Mr. Sancho's crab bus was a lot more advanced than the Dverg.

Still, it got me thinking. If the engineers of the Reverse World could somehow collaborate with the ones of this world, they'd probably be able to make something immense. Though that would be too hard to arrange.

Still... I couldn't help but wonder about the possibilities if I could bring two worlds together as one. I shook my head and turned back to the dwarves.

"I'd like to see how this thing moves. Can I pilot it?"

"Aye, even a greenhorn could! Y'wanna give it a shot?" I sat down in the cockpit that protruded from the back. Unlike the Frame Gear, the Dverg couldn't read the intentions of its pilot, so everything was manual.

"Right... Pour yer magic into the spellstone near the control stick. That'll fire up the kiln... Then make it walk slow."

"Alright... Step one, then... Gonna pour in my magic..."

"Ten-hut! Stop! Sir, yes sir! You gotta stop! Master's magic power is a little...!" Rosetta tried to warn me, but I just casually poured my magic in as usual.

A moment later, the Dverg began to make some weird noises. Then it exploded.

"WHAAAAAT?!" Shrieked the dwarves.

"What the...?" The armored portion of the Dverg's abdomen was blasted clear off, and smoke began to rise from its insides.

I freaked out and hopped out of the cockpit. The dwarves were standing there, mouths agape, as they stared from the Dverg to me.

Did I do that?

“Master, sir... No magic kiln can handle your level of magic without compression, sir! It’d be like trying to light a candle with an advanced firestorm spell!”

“...Touya, your magic power is far more than the limits of the furnace. You poured in enough to make it overflow... Then the excess simply detonated, with nowhere to go.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?!” I didn’t know what to tell the dwarves. I really, really hoped that they’d believe me when I told them it was an accident.

I stared quietly at the poor dwarves, who were still staring in horror at their wrecked machine.

I quietly arranged for several barrels of booze to be given to them as an apology.



Brunhild, like most countries, had an area dedicated to medical care. In layman’s terms, we had a clinic. A standard facility where people who were ill or concerned went for medical checkups.

Medical technology was definitely far behind Earth’s standards in this world, but they also had restoration magic. In fact, most treatments were performed using this kind of magic.

Restoration magic was an umbrella term for magic that cured injuries, recovered vitality, removed curses, sucked out poisons, and so on. There was also resurrection magic, but that was sort of a field of its own.

It wasn’t easy to bring someone back from the dead. There were certain conditions that needed to be fulfilled, and even risks to the caster.

For the most part, resurrection magic wasn't carried out as a normal procedure. Not to mention the fact that the magic wasn't even guaranteed to work. If it went wrong, it could even kill the person casting it.

Still, that was neither here nor there.

The point was that Brunhild had itself a clinic. Doctors and nurses were employed there and were often on call. Brunhild's castle town was a relatively small capital, but the clinic still handled injuries every day and night.

And it just so happened that I was visiting the clinic on that day.

I wasn't really there to formally inspect it or anything, I guess I just wanted to check the place out.

"Come forth, Light! Soothing Comfort: [Cure Heal]" A soft light came out of Sue's palm before wrapping around a child's injured arm. The damaged skin was restored to normal in the blink of an eye, and the open cut was now nowhere to be found.

"Does it hurt?"

"Not anymore..."

"Good. Be careful not to play in the forest alone, okay? Your mommy might get upset." The child's eyes were wet with fresh tears, but he sniffed and nodded toward Sue. His mother smiled and thanked us before walking out of the clinic with him, hand in hand.

Even though restoration magic existed in this world, not everyone could use it. It also still required magical power. That meant that the number of times someone could use it to heal someone else per day was set in stone.

That's why we tried to avoid using magic unless it was really necessary. Which was also why healthcare could get pricey, depending on the injury or magic supply. If we treated every reckless

cut and scrape with magic, then our staff would quickly run out of magic. Our treatment costs were still fairly cheap compared to the other nations, though.

“Good work. You’re getting pretty good at this, Sue.”

“Ah, I’m not all that... If I could use **[Area Heal]** like you, Touya... I’d be a lot more efficient.” *Eh... It’s not that simple. That spell’s a super advanced one from the light school... In my case, the fact that I can use it is more thanks to god than anything I did...*

Sue liked to come to the clinic to help out now and then. Her butler, Leim, always accompanied her during her visits.

She had a good aptitude for Light magic, so she enjoyed using it to help people out.

The child mortality rate was pretty high in this world. There weren’t just diseases and accidents to worry about, the threat of monsters was pretty high in some regions too.

The little boy Sue had just gotten done with healing had wandered around in the forest and been scratched by a Lone-Horned Rabbit. Children who grew up in urban environments didn’t have too much experience with magical beasts. Because they weren’t familiar with such creatures, they didn’t realize how careful they needed to be.

We’d hunted down the monsters in the vicinity of the town, but they had a habit of breeding fast and were on the rise again. I considered using my smartphone to target every beast in a wide vicinity in order to destroy them all, but Guildmaster Relisha asked me not to.

She said that if we killed every low-tier monster, then there’d be no reason for adventurers with a lower rank than Red to come around Brunhild too often. She raised a fair point, so I erected a barrier around the castle town to prevent monsters from coming into the city itself.

The barrier prevented monsters from coming in, but it didn't stop people entering or exiting. The little boy was only injured because he left the town and was caught in the forest.

There happened to be an adventurer in the forest at the same time. If he hadn't come along, the boy might've died. I decided to have Fiana, the headmistress of our town's school, teach a special lesson on safety.

"Touya, can I get a top-up? The magic in my engagement ring is nearly dry."

"Already? Goodness... You've really been working hard." Sue and my other fiancées all had engagement rings enchanted with the **[Transfer]** spell, allowing them to draw from the deep pool of magic power I'd stored into it. This allowed them to tap into my own magic reserves and cast more spells than they'd ordinarily be able to. However, the reserves weren't infinite. The rings would eventually run out, so I had to refill them now and then.

But man... Sue really used it all up already...? I guess she's been working pretty hard in the clinic, but I bet she's been practicing magic a lot at home, too... I'm pretty sure I put enough reserve magic in these things to last a ton of time, so she must be really going at it.

I hoped Sue was keeping an eye on her own health, I didn't want her overdoing it. I leaned over and took Sue by the hand before pouring my magic back into her ring.

"Don't train too hard, alright? Leen said you're in the middle of a growth period right now, so overexerting your magic could have an adverse effect on you when you're more mature."

"I got it, geez... You always worry about me, Touya!"

"Of course I worry about you. You're one of my brides-to-be." It was true that I had a habit of fretting about Sue more often than others, though. She often ran headlong into danger. She wasn't the kind of

person to ruminate on things for a while, she just went for stuff. It wasn't a bad trait to have, but it did kind of lead to her being a little hardheaded.

I was glad she was passionate, I just didn't want that passion to be detrimental to her. It was good to be focused on things, too.

"You're always worried about me, Touya... You get worried about the others, too. But don't you know how much more worried we were when you went to that other world...?"

"I know... I'm sorry." I knew it well, they'd all made a point to tell me.

When I went to the other side and vanished from this world entirely, they must have been extremely nervous. I felt extremely guilty, especially for making a girl as young as Sue be so worried for my wellbeing.

"That reminds me, Touya... I've been talking with my mother."

"With your mother?"

"Mhm. My mother was blind for such a long time, so she couldn't go outside due to how dangerous things could be. Then she regained her eyesight thanks to you, and the world opened up to her again... But now she has a baby in her tummy, so she can't really go out and overdo it again. So I was wondering if there was anything we could do for her to cheer her up without her having to leave the house." Ellen had been rendered bedridden and blind for a long time thanks to her affliction. It must have been liberating to finally be freed from that, but then she went and got pregnant which meant she couldn't afford to strain her body...

It was no surprise to hear that would make her a little depressed.

"What does Ellen like to do?"

"She likes to watch stage plays! Father tried to call in a theater troupe to our home once, but mother stopped it. She said to call a

performance for only one person would deprive another audience of the theater's splendor." *Man... Calling a private theater performance for your house? Talk about luxury... Pretty amazing of Ellen to refuse it, though.*

If we did a stage production for her at home, that would certainly remove the need for her to go outside... But she wouldn't want something like that, so it wouldn't feel enjoyable for her.

"Hm... Maybe I can fix something for her."

"Really?! Amazing, Touya...! Thank you so much!"

"To be honest it won't be me sorting this. There's an artifact Doctor Babylon has that I think we can make use of." Sue's eyes were still sparkling with joy as I gave her a wry smile. I felt a little pitiful, though.

The artifacts in the storehouse were certainly incredible, but they had pretty specific uses. There were many fantastic things in there that just didn't really have applications in daily life.

"Alright. I'll go get things prepared. Would you mind if we did it tonight?"

"Hmm... I'll ask father and mother, but I'm sure it's fine!" Sue smiled before bolting out of the clinic. I needed the kings of Belfast, Refreese, and Regulus to introduce me to the major theater troupes of their countries. The major theaters were basically state-owned, so this wouldn't be an issue.

The problem was probably more in the kings themselves... They could be pains at times. Also, the artifact I needed to use to make my plan work was vital. I needed to produce some more at the workshop.

I used **[Teleport]** to leap off to Babylon immediately.

“Now then... Please try putting a little magic power into this crystal ball.”

“Like this...? Oh!” Ellen reached out toward the small baseball-sized orb in front of her. As she let her magic flow into it, it began to light up and project the image of a stage performance into the air in front of it. The dim room was then filled with the very atmosphere of the theater.

“Ooh! I can hear them and see them...! It’s like I’m really there!”

“Amazing... Did you record this on your smartphone, Touya?” Sue and her mother looked on in amazement as the theater began to unfold in their home. Ellen’s eyes lit up as she watched the play unfold.

“This is different from one of my recordings. It’s a live feed... Or rather, this artifact lets you see the inside of a theater from a far distance away. It works similarly to our Frame Gears’ cameras. The camera faces toward the stage, so I guess you could say it’s like being in a cockpit.” The artifact was called the Overseer’s Eye. Originally they were used for watchtowers and defense. Some were even installed into the underside of Babylon.

I decided to co-operate with the leaders of each nation in order to visit their respective major theaters. Then I had them install a statue in the best viewing location, and have the monitoring artifacts installed into the eyes.

Thanks to that, the stage plays could now be viewed on demand from afar.

There were six different crystal balls that could be swapped out on to the pedestal, allowing a view of six different stages. All you had to do was swap them out, kind of like a TV remote control.

Ellen sat on the couch and held her hand against her stomach.

“See, mother...? Now you can watch the theater even at home. I’m so happy...”

“Sue... Thank you so much for this. And to you, Grand Duke... I can’t put into words how much this means to me.”

“Nah, please don’t worry about it... I didn’t really do much this time, honest.” Doctor Babylon had already invented the orbs, and I had relied on the kings to grant me permission. I was really just a middleman in facilitating all of it.

I also decided to give those kings their own Overseer’s Eyes, so they could tune in as well. They’d probably watch the same performances as each other over the next couple of days.

I smiled and let the mother and daughter talk for a bit before handing a sheet of paper to Duke Ortlinde.

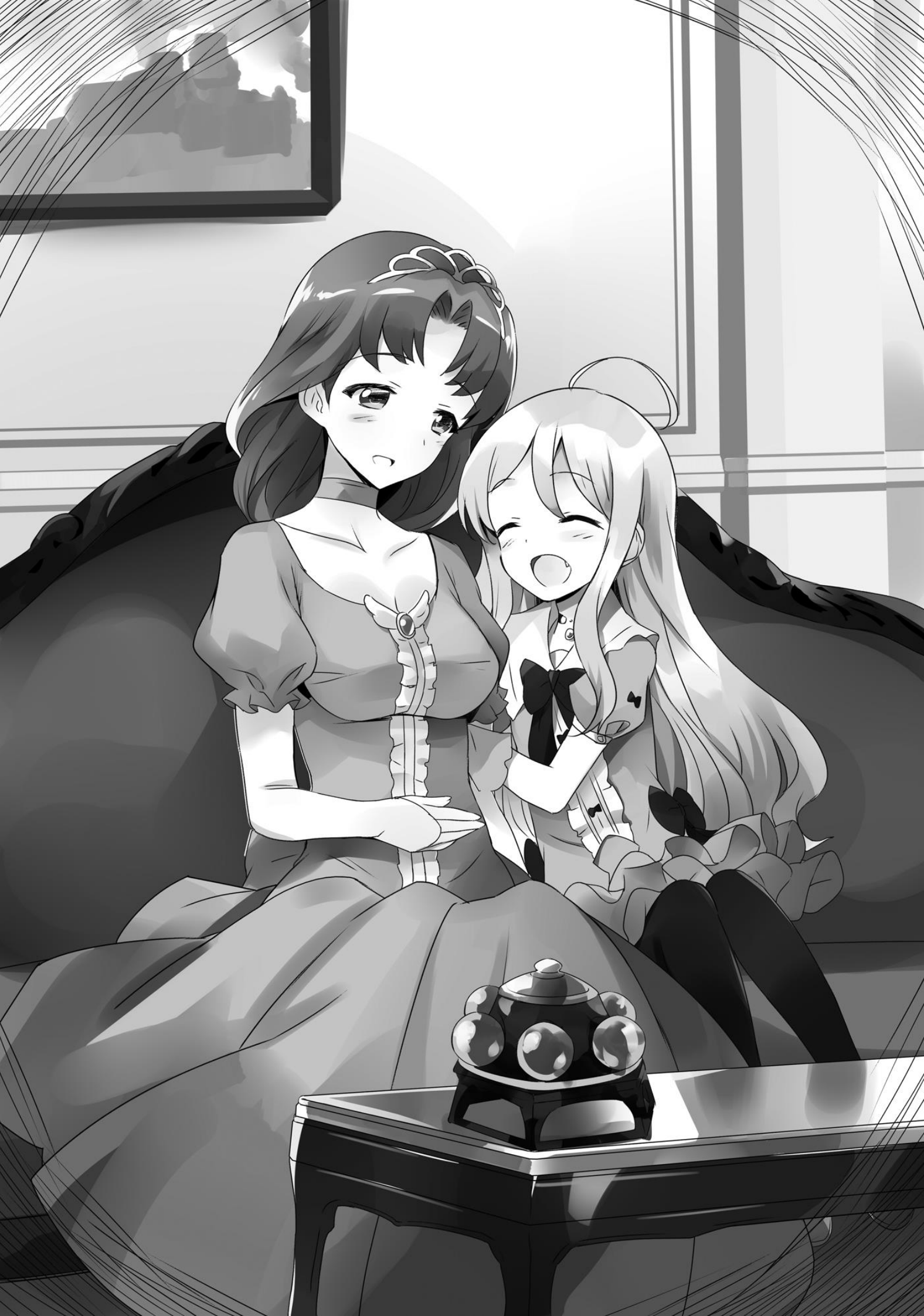
“What’s this?”

“This is a schedule for all the major theaters. It’ll tell you what shows are airing, which theater, and at which time. I’ve arranged to have an updated schedule sent to you every month.”

“I see... We’re truly thankful. For you to go this far for my family, even though you’re a head of state... Forgive us for our demands.”

“Sue asked for it, so I don’t mind at all.” Besides, I wanted to do something nice for my future mother-in-law. Though I did want her to avoid watching anything too intense, since I didn’t want her or the baby becoming agitated.

“When you’re born, we’ll all watch the shows together. And I’ll get to hold you, so don’t worry... I can’t wait to see you...” Sue smiled and spoke toward Ellen’s tummy. The child would end up being my brother or sister-in-law. I hoped that they’d grow up to become as wonderful as Sue.



Ellen got a little queasy now and then, but her pregnancy had been alright. I ended up making some rice porridge for her and gave Duke Ortlinde plenty of citrus fruits to keep her in good health. Morning sickness wasn't unnatural, so **[Recovery]** didn't help to alleviate it.

Husbands had it rough during pregnancies, but not as rough as their wives. Still, their lack of power to ease sicknesses and aches must have been frustrating. They had to do everything within their power to support their wives, regardless.

Eventually, I would have to experience the same feeling, too. Though that wouldn't be for a good while yet. It definitely seemed like raising a child would be difficult, but I also knew in my heart that it would be truly rewarding.

As I thought of a future yet to come, I left Duke Ortlinde's estate.

Afterword

Here we are again. I hope all of you enjoyed volume thirteen of *In Another World With My Smartphone*.

There was a lot of stuff going on in this volume, so we only included one interlude right at the very start.

In the webnovel, Aer doesn't fully settle into Brunhild until a bit later, but the circumstances seemed fair enough to mix up the plot structure here. I didn't change much of the main story, but I added a small part with Sue toward the end and a few tweaks here and there.

Actually, while I was working on the manuscript for this volume, I worked myself to physical exhaustion and ended up hospitalized. I need to take better care of my health. Everyone, please don't forget to take it a little easier in the harsh summer months. I've been discharged from the hospital now, but I don't want to go back in there any time soon.

The Brunhild Festival was the main attraction of this volume, so I hope you all had a good time there. Have you ever been to a festival before?

In Sendai, there are a lot of festivals. There's Tanabata, the Jozenji Street Jazz Festival, the Michinoku YOSAKOI Festival, and a lot of others like that. I've lived in Sendai for a long time now, but I haven't actually gone to any of them...

Because I live nearby, I always tell myself that I can go any time I want... But I guess I just never did. Then again, the combination of the summer heat and the busy crowds often makes me feel ill. I get a bit light-headed in busy places.

Little town festivals or smaller events are nice, though. I'll often drop in for a candy apple or a crêpe.

I was thinking about going this year, but... the hospitalization kind of messed that up, so it would probably be best if I skipped on it again.

My health really wanes in summer... That's actually why my pen name, Patora Fuyuhara, has the '冬' (Fuyu) part in it because I have more of an affinity for winter.

Anyway, let me get to my special thanks.

To my illustrator, Eiji Usatsuka, I love the cover illustration for this volume. You really brought it to life. I can't wait to see what you come up with next.

Tomofumi Ogasawara, thanks for handling the mecha designs as usual. I love how you made the purple crown look. I'm looking forward to seeing how your interpretations of the other crowns come out later on.

As always, K... I'm sorry for causing you any inconveniences, but I'm really happy to work with you. I look forward to hearing from you next.

And, once again, to everyone at Hobby Japan editorial department involved with this book's publication, you have my deepest thanks.

But I can't forget to thank you, dear reader, and everyone who first stumbled upon my story while browsing Shousetsuka ni Narou.

Patora Fuyuhara

Bonus Short Story and Column

Bonus Story: Chivalrous Thieves in Another World

“Oh crap, a guard! Hurry, follow me!”

Five shadowed figures stood on a rooftop and watched the lone guard run toward the voice. The man was unaware he was being lured away on a wild goose chase.

“Heh, looks like he fell for the decoy...”

The voice had been nothing but a distraction, and now their obstacle was negated. The leader of the Red Cats, Nia Vermouth, grinned broadly and began to laugh.

“Nia, don’t let your guard down yet. We aren’t done here,” Est Floatier, the deputy leader, quickly reprimanded her commander. She’d known the girl long enough to know she often got ahead of herself.

“We managed the job faster than I expected.”

“Well, we do have this little fella on our side...”

Euri and Euni, two high-ranking members of the Red Cats, grinned as they gestured toward a little humanoid that stood nearby. It was a small, child-sized Golem that was clad in red armor. At first glance, it looked like a standard automaton, but this little guy was Blood Rouge, the red crown. The crown series of Golems were at the apex of Golem power.

Rouge was carrying a small safe on his shoulder, one it had pilfered from the mansion. The safe contained some valuables, but it also contained documentation and evidence of illegitimate business transactions, along with embezzling. If they were ever leaked, then the merchant who lived in the mansion would lose the backing of the nobles who supported him, and he’d likely be ruined.

“Any issues, Rouge?”

“Negative. All systems nominal.”

Rouge had been damaged in a clash with another crown and had recently been repaired thanks to the help of a mysterious stranger.

This mission was also being used to test whether or not Rouge was operating smoothly again.

“I’m glad that Touya guy managed to fix you... But I really wonder what was up with that guy.”

“Yeah, he had a ton of valuable metal and could use all kinds of magic... He was definitely a weirdo, but I don’t think he’s bad.”

There weren’t many in the world that could use magic. Golems were typically used as magical tools instead. It was a cheaper long-term investment to buy a Golem than it was to hire the services of a mage.

“Weird or not, he still helped us. We’ll have to be sure to repay him whenever he comes back.”

“Yep. So let’s make money while we can.”

“Let’s get out of here, anyway... Don’t wanna run into the guards.”

“Roger.”

At Est’s urging, the five shadowed figures made their escape. And, as they vanished under the starry sky, the Reverse World felt just a little bit more righteous.

My First Hospitalization

My body was quite frail when I was born, but I was pretty proud to say that throughout my life, I'd never had to be hospitalized. However, this year... the end of a long streak finally came.

It was around eight at night. My stomach really hurt, but I figured it was a regular stomachache. And so, I decided to go to bed early and assumed I'd feel better in the morning. Unfortunately, the pain just kept getting worse instead of getting better. I started to sweat profusely, and my entire body began to feel heavy. It hurt so bad I thought I would pass out.

I thought of calling an ambulance, but I lived in a peaceful residential area and I really didn't want to inconvenience my neighbors. That was why I called a taxi and, wincing, I headed toward the emergency room.

By the time I reached the hospital, I couldn't move. I'd fainted in the taxi and couldn't even tell which hospital I'd been brought to. They ended up putting me on a wheelchair to get me inside, and then I was transferred to a stretcher.

The doctor asked me some vague, impossible to remember questions... I ended up getting a CT scan, and my arm was hooked up to an IV drip.

The pain continued throughout this experience. It wasn't as bad as it was when it peaked in the taxi, but I still felt terrible. They ended up deciding I needed to be hospitalized.

I sat in the bed, tossing and turning, as pain ran through my body in dull waves. I couldn't get to sleep at all, and the aching continued through until morning.

The next day they used a gastroscope on me, but it was so uncomfortable that I required a sedative. They injected me, and I was unconscious in moments. I ended up waking up thinking it was

about to happen, but it was already finished. Then, I was put through a series of test before being x-rayed and sent back to bed.

For the next three days, I was in the sickbed, battling with the waves of pain that wracked my body... But gradually the pain did begin to abate. Over the course of those days, I didn't eat a single thing, but strangely, I didn't feel hungry either. The pain kind of distracted me from that and the IV drip was keeping me nourished.

On the fourth day, I was able to eat a light meal, and they said they'd be able to discharge me. I remember savoring that dreary meal and thinking about how tasty it was.

There was a little pain, but it wasn't unbearable. I was finally discharged on the fourth night. I ended up losing around 4kg, as well.

And... according to the examination, they couldn't determine the source of the sudden pain. There was nothing particularly wrong with my stomach, apparently. The doctor said that it might've been stress-induced, but if anything, the whole hospital stay made me more nervous and stressed than anything else.

Either way, since that day I've tried to be careful with what I eat, and I've also tried to be more relaxed in general. It wasn't exactly an experience I'm keen to repeat.

The funniest part is that the manuscript for this volume was actually sent out during my hospital stay, so I'm glad I still managed to get it done on time.

But please, if you're reading this... take care of your body. Health is absolutely paramount.

In Another World With My Smartphone Mecha Design Specs

Ortlinde (Overload Mode)



Developer: High Rosetta
Maintainer: High Rosetta
Administrator: Fredmonica
Height: 18.4m (37.5m in Overload Mode)
Maximum Capacity: 1 Person (4 in Overload Mode)
Primary Color: Gold

Bone Frame Designer: Regina Babylon
Affiliation: Duchy of Brunhild
Compatible Pilot: Sushie Urnea Ortlinde
Weight: 19.5t (102.3t in Overload Mode)

Armaments (Overload Mode): Cannon Knuckle, Stardust Shell

A new special-model Frame Gear designed specifically for Sue. One of the Valkyrie Gears.

Can combine with several vehicles to activate the Ortlinde Overload. These vehicles are

Gungnir (A high-velocity flying boat)

Laevateinn (An armored train)

Gungnir (A subterranean tank)

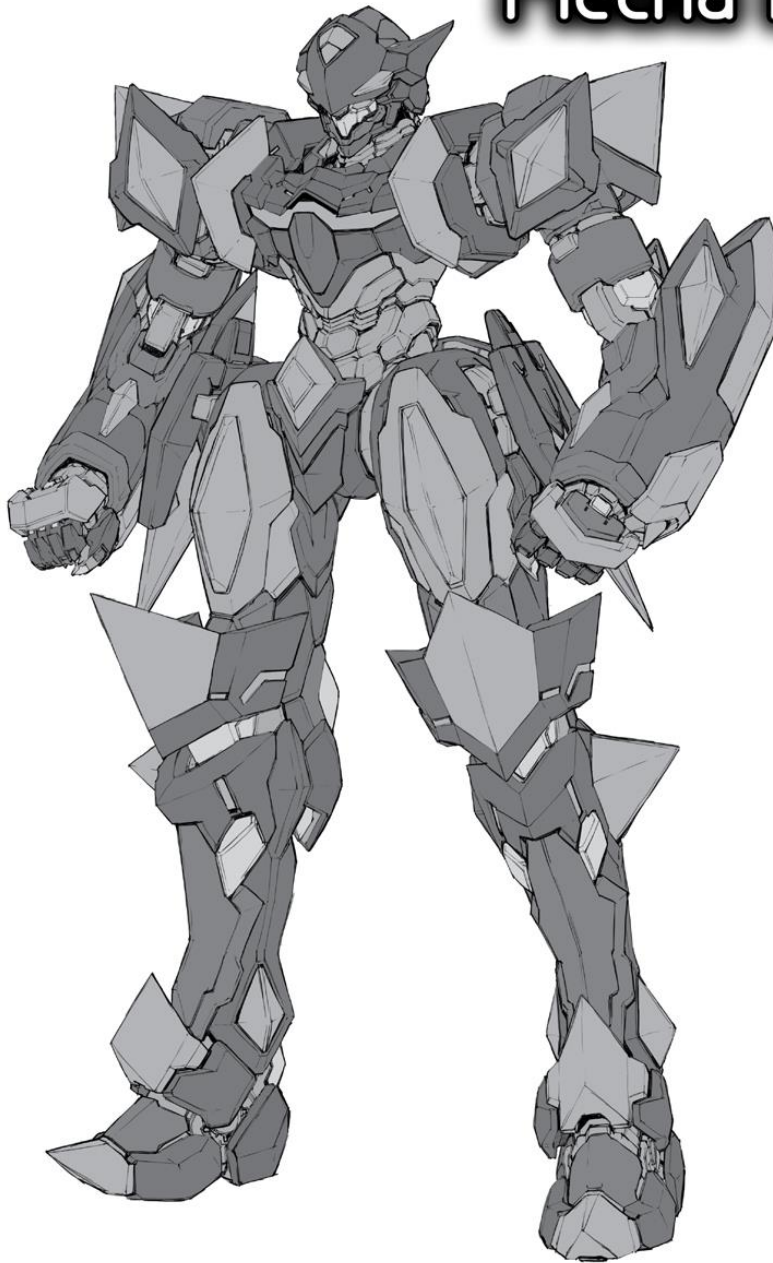
Of all the Frame Gears, this one offers the greatest defensive capabilities.

To achieve this, it trades off its mobility. Due to the additional pilots that come in with the extra vehicles, controlling the Frame Gear is an easy, divided task.

In Another World With My Smartphone

Mecha Design Specs

Gerhilde



Developer: High Rosetta
Maintainer: High Rosetta
Administrator: Fredmonica

Height: 17.1m Weight: 7.2t
Primary Color: Red

Bone Frame Designer: Regina Babylon
Affiliation: Duchy of Brunhild
Compatible Pilot: Elze Silhoueska
Maximum Capacity: 1 Person

Armaments: Enhanced Pile Bunker x2, Phrasium Combat Knife x2, Bone Frame Designer: Regina Babylon
A new special-model Frame Gear designed specifically for Elze. One of the Valkyrie Gears. This Frame Gear was built with close-quarters durability in mind, with a sturdy armor capable of resisting most kinds of strikes. Its armor is entirely coated in Phrasium, which allows onlookers to see the burning red color of the base Frame through the translucent parts. It has an emphasis on mobility, with a focus on offensive output rather than defensive potential. Its armor has been bolstered by Phrasium material.



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by Patora Fuyuhara

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Edited by DxS

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